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THE RETAIL FLORIST



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TORONTO

THE RETAIL FLORIST

by JOHN H. LIESVELD



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* *Dedication*

To my wife, Alice, and our children, Jack and Jane, whose inspiration and love make all work a happy experience.

* *Preface*

It is with humility that I write my ideas about the business of being a florist. I do so with the hope that students will be guided correctly, and that florists already established in their businesses may be benefitted by the ideas, findings and problems covered in this book. I am thinking also of the young men and women who are floundering around unhappily trying to find their proper positions in the whirling cogs of business, who might not, by the trial and error method used by the author, fall into the right notch. It happened that the right notch for the author was the florists' business.

There is a dearth of printed material on the subject of being a florist, and few publications cover all branches of the subject. The sharing of ideas is a talisman of success. To this day, I still have to meet the florist who does not have ideas of practical value, new to me. My association with him has consistently benefitted me, in that I have gained through the application of his ideas to my own business and life. The sharing of those ideas is the only way we can express our gratitude to the many friends whose suggestions and assistance make this book possible.

It seems quite presumptuous for one who became a florist without any specific training in that business whatever to be writing authoritatively upon the subject. Certain of my own experiences and the occasional appearance of the personal pronoun, I, are used only as examples of good or bad procedure and will, I hope, be understood as educational illustration. The analysis, outlining and study connected with this work are in themselves of far greater educational value to the author than to anyone else who might study and read these chapters.

In answer to the recurring queries for the underlying reason for the steady growth of our business, I must reply honestly that it is

our sincere policy to apply Christian principles to all relationships and transactions. It is my hope that this book will give inspiration to many of the young florists coming into the field and courage to others who are striving to make their flower shops real productive enterprises of success and happiness.

JOHN H. LIESVELD

* *Acknowledgments*

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THE RETAIL FLORIST

I * *Significance of Flowers*

RELATIONSHIP TO BUSINESS

From the beginning of time flowers have had a definite place in the lives of men. Since the days of the first man and woman in the Garden of Eden, flowers have had a general appeal because of their beauty and fragrance. The development of habits and customs in the use of flowers has made the florists' business what it is today.

History reveals flower use in religious ceremonies, festivals and banquets in Egypt and Rome. The Bible makes reference in a parable to the beauty of the lilies of the field and also tells of the adoring crowds strewing palm branches in the road as Christ made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Palm branches are used to this day in the religious celebration of that occasion on Palm Sunday. Flowers in those early days also were used for personal adornment and especially as garlands and crowns for men and women.

Flora, the goddess of flowers and spring in Roman mythology, was worshiped in ancient Rome in the spring with special ceremonies. From those days to the present, flowers have increased even more in the appreciation and use that civilization has made of them. Their wide range of color, shape and fragrance makes them naturally appealing to children, men and women. The scope of their influence on our lives is difficult to evaluate. H. T. Tuckerman, American author and critic, said almost a century ago, "To analyze the charms of flowers is like dissecting music; it is one of those things which it is far better to enjoy, than to attempt fully to understand."

AN UNDERSTOOD MESSAGE

Flowers have become so associated with sentiment today that most cards enclosed with them as gifts bear no message other than the

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name of the sender, because the blooms themselves in their beauty are more eloquent than words.

The custom of sending flowers to loved ones to express admiration, sympathy, gratitude and congratulation has grown each year. The florist, through giving the right kind of service, helps to satisfy this urgent desire of persons to express their feelings.

FOR EVERY OCCASION

The occasions upon which flowers are given to loved ones are almost limitless; for instance, wedding anniversaries, birthdays, St. Valentine's day, Christmas, Easter, Mothers' day, graduation, parties, dances and often on no special day, but just to remind the sender's beloved of his thoughts and devotion. A large volume of flowers is used to express good wishes to the sick at home and in hospitals and sympathy to families who are bereaved, or in tribute, memory, respect and admiration for deceased friends and relatives. The lavish use of flowers in wedding ceremonies is widespread and a definite part of the festivity. As an expression of gratitude, flowers are a welcome and generally accepted medium. Many bouquets are sent as apologies for oversights or for regrettable manners and hasty words and have proved themselves to be wonderful healers of hurt feelings, as well as morale builders for the downhearted.

Aside from those sentimental practices in sending flowers, there are many others. An important one is the use of flowers and plants for decoration in homes, offices, stores, meeting halls, institutions, etc. The many colors, shapes and textures of flowers and foliage makes them ideal for general usage in all decorations. They are so desirable that where the use of fresh flowers is impracticable or prohibitive in cost, because of replacements necessary, artificial flowers are used as an alternative.

BUSINESS GESTURES

Practical-minded business men are becoming more convinced of the value of sending flowers as an expression of goodwill, gratitude or congratulations to their friends, customers and competitors. The

openings of new stores and offices are always celebrated with numerous floral arrangements from patrons, associates and fellow merchants. In recent years flowers are being used more and more by business concerns at Christmas time as gifts to their valued customers. Ralph Waldo Emerson, the great thinker and author, said years ago, "Flowers are always apt presents because they are a bold assertion that one ray of beauty outvalues all the utilities of the world." Experience is proving the truth of that statement every day.

The wearing of flowers has become more popular as accepted fashion by well dressed women from year to year. Artificial flowers on women's clothes and hats are always used, but never with the same thrill and satisfaction that comes with the wearing of real, fresh fragrant flowers. The styling of these flowers changes with the styles of clothes and the seasons. Men, too, wear their lapel flowers and on formal occasions are not considered well dressed without boutonnières.

FLOWERS AND CHURCHES

The inspirational value of flowers in their natural beauty is recognized by church leaders, and as a result the altars of most of the churches in America are graced with bouquets for services of all kinds. Christmas, Easter and Palm Sunday services would not be complete without the beautiful flower decorations commonly used. Many churches, accepting the value of flowers, use them in other practical ways as tokens to the ill and bereaved. One church at Kansas City, Mo., uses its own printed cards to enclose with floral arrangements that are sent to its members, as follows: "These flowers come to you from the Central Presbyterian Church and are sent to refresh your soul with the joy and peace of the God who made them. . . ." Man through all of the centuries has never been able to match the beauty of a flower, and for that reason he reveres the wonders of nature in growth and development of plant life.

Illustrators, advertising men and designers make widespread employment of flowers in their layouts to attract attention to products by no means analogous. They understand the appeal and psychology of

floral beauty. Florists are proud their product can be used in other lines of industry for decoration, advertising, display and packaging.

FLOWERS FOR THE HOME

It has been said that the one great uncultivated field for the florist to develop is the sale of flowers for everyday use in the home. The florist will do that in the years to come, because more flowers could well be used and appreciated in more homes. Few of us realize, because we have not stopped to consider the facts, how general is the desire to use flowers in the home. From the humblest tenement room, with its vine in a shiny tin can, to the most elegant mansion, with its solarium and beautiful flower arrangements, their beauty, color and charm are cherished.

It is encouraging that in some homes today flowers are considered as important as linen on the dining room table, as valuable as any other decoration in the living room and hall and as necessary as perfume on the dressing table.

The florists of America through years of patient development of their product and business are today satisfying that need of the citizens. That business in all of its branches has developed into a billion-dollar industry, employing the services of about 250,000 people who make their living by helping the rest of the population. The improving of that service, making flowers more accessible to more people, is the aim of those thousands of good people engaged in floriculture today.

II * *On Being a Florist*

PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES

A successful florist is more than a dealer or grower of flowers. He is a lover of natural beauty and color. He is an artist. He is a merchandiser and a salesman of sentiment. He is a business man who makes the most of his transactions with people who are celebrating joyous events or commemorating sad occasions.

What does it take on the part of an individual to be able to do those things well? First of all, it takes hard work. If you are looking for a profession that is not confining and exacting, do not try to be a florist. If you rebel at the mention of overtime work, irregular hours and foregoing most of the festivities of holiday times, you would be unhappy as a florist. If you are impatient and not prepared to work for a few years building up the business to a profitable enterprise, you would become discouraged before your shop had a satisfactory clientele. If you do not have a natural aptitude for designing and do not enjoy working with your hands in wet stems, soil, plants, moss and greens, you would be better at some other line of endeavor.

FRIENDLINESS ESSENTIAL

Are you a friendly person? Do you enjoy meeting people? Do you inspire their confidence? If so, you have a wonderful asset in your personality to assist you in this business. A flower shop should be an unusually pleasant place for its customers and employees. When someone buys flowers for another, it is an important event in their lives. The person receiving the flowers often means much to the sender. Customers do not hesitate to leave orders in the hands of a florist who speaks confidently, with the self assurance that he can

handle the orders in just the fashion desired. That florist derives happiness as well as profit from his business by expressing the sentiments of his customers in floral arrangements.

The personality of an individual is one of the strongest factors in his success in any business in which he comes in contact with people. Personality traits can be developed and changed with a conscious effort in that direction. After practice an undesirable trait or habit, such as timidity and self-consciousness, can be overcome and supplanted with self-confidence and assurance.

COMMUNITY STANDING

People enjoy doing business and talking with those who know what they are doing. They are the ones who become leaders in their field and are called upon to take part in civic affairs, community or church activities and business associations. It is important that a florist make as many contacts as possible with business leaders in his community. All friends and acquaintances are potential customers of the florist and, without urging or aggressiveness, will sooner or later come to him if he has shown unselfish interest in them and their work.

Personal integrity, that quality of character in one whose word is as good as his bond, is of supreme significance in business success. The desire to be of service, to help others unselfishly, with sympathetic understanding of their problems and circumstances, is a trait easily recognized and always duly compensated in business associations with individuals or groups. The Golden Rule, "do unto others," is still the principal motive behind the success of any enterprise. The man or woman who loves beauty and likes to work with flowers, yet having only mediocre ability as an artist, can, with diligent practice and the application of the Golden Rule, be successful.

The crying need of business today is a moral one, that of the application of the highest principles to its problems. It is imperative that we begin taking more of our religion out of the church pews and begin applying more of it to our business and everyday living, if we expect continued progress.

A florist who is a good mixer and appreciates the companionship and acquaintance of people in all walks of life undoubtedly will build a substantial following, if his service and workmanship match his friendly personality. It is a business in which years of experience build steadfast friendships with many of the customers he has served satisfactorily. Many families rate their florist in the same regard and affection they hold their family physician and minister.

APTITUDE FOR THE WORK

Aptitude tests are quite generally used today by companies in selecting employees for certain positions. Psychologists and vocational guidance counselors make extensive use of them. After a short series of simple tests, questions and answers, they can tell quite accurately whether a person's aptitude or natural interest falls into the category of art, music, mechanics, social service, etc. A few years ago I submitted to a few of these simple tests and was surprised to find how accurate the findings were as to ability and interests.

Had more emphasis been placed on vocational guidance and aptitude when I was a youth, I probably would never have spent six years in a university securing a law degree. My father, a sensible, thrifty, hardworking man, insisted that I start in the university with a definite goal in mind—specialization, rather than a general course. I had visions of some day having a mahogany desk in a big office, but had no idea of the course I wanted to pursue. Although teachers in high school had suggested that I major in art and music, I rejected their advice with the statement that I wanted to make a great deal of money and have a big office. I finally decided to study law and did for six years, working for high grades, not particularly because I enjoyed the subjects, but mainly because the sense of achievement gave me satisfaction. After receiving high marks each semester I promptly forgot the subjects and gave no further thought to their practical application.

After graduation and practicing with one of the finest firms in Kansas City for a few years, I was no happier than I was in my studies in university as a bookworm. One day I went into the office

of the senior member and asked him if he thought I would ever be a lawyer. He was kind in replying I was already one, but he doubted if I would ever be a member of the firm, adding, however, they would hate to lose my services. He realized I was a misfit and unhappy in that work and said that he had been watching me and that he thought I was the type of person who would be suited to more tangible pursuits; that I would be more successful at work in which I could see the result of things done with my hands rather than working at the intangibles and theories of law in long court controversy. Rather than throw overboard my legal education at once, I used it for a couple of years in credit and collection work with large business concerns. I was still unsatisfied and saw no future in that direction.

A HUMBLE BEGINNING

About that time I had made the acquaintance of the proprietor of a small flower shop in the vicinity in which I lived. One day when I purchased some flowers I mentioned that I thought I would like that work. A week later, on June 15, 1933, on the payment of \$250 borrowed from my father, I was the sole owner and manager of that small flower shop.

It took determination to keep going in those lean years of depression when that shop was grossing \$3 per day in sales, but I liked the work, in spite of the fact that many times I had to make a 25 cent sale to have money to go out and grab a hamburger for lunch.

Because of my ignorance of the business, it was often difficult to go out and help a customer for fear that I might know nothing about making up a desired order. Often I did not know and had to admit it. As I was the subject of ridicule on the part of many florists, because I was trying to be a florist without any training whatsoever, made my feeling of inferiority more acute. Wholesalers, however, were most kind in telling me the names of flowers, how to take care of them and how to use them.

Working with flowers and accessories was interesting to me, and

gradually the shop received notice from passersby because of the window displays. An experienced designer came to help me for a few weeks, but the business could not stand the additional \$15 per week overhead.

Walking down the street one day, I met Mr. Rock, the "dean" of Kansas City florists. I will never forget that day. He asked how things were going, gave me a pat on the back, told me to stick it out, work hard and said he was sure I could make a go of the business. Those words of encouragement have stayed with me to this day, and the only way I can ever repay him is by passing on his good words to every neophyte and prospective florist I chance to meet.

Innate abilities can be trained with practice, and poor personality traits can be overcome to a great extent, but it does take persistent effort. If you are working at something you like and for which you are well suited, you will gladly make the sacrifice necessary to achieve your goal.

COMBINED TALENTS

The combination of good business judgment and artistic ability are essential. If one individual does not possess both talents, a solution would be the employment of a designer or business manager, as the case might require, or two persons, each with one of these qualifications, might become partners in the flower business.

A man or woman launching a florists' business alone will undoubtedly be confronted with tasks that he or she does not relish, such as bookkeeping, janitor work, trimming flower stems, etc. However, as the business grows, those and other duties, for which the owner is not as well suited, can be delegated to employees as they are added to the staff. With the growth of business the owner can then handle that part of the work considered most advantageous to his ability.

Dextrous fingers are an essential requisite of the floral designer. With practice they can be developed into the speedy skilled hands of a floral artist.

A cheerful disposition, a trim build, a keen mind, a youthful spirit, an inquiring and imaginative mind, an honest eye and an optimistic nature are all priceless characteristics and contribute significantly to any personal endeavor.

GIVE IT A FAIR TRIAL

After making the decision to be a florist, be prepared to give it a fair trial for at least two years. Giving up too soon, instead of seeing it through, has too often led to abandonment or unprofitable sale of the business. Keeping busy, minding your own business instead of looking for greener grass in the other flower shops and coveting their prosperity or ability, may be the secret of your ultimate success. Your diligence and your own original ideas and imagination may be the factors that make your service and floral art different, appealing and popular, whereas doing the same type of work done in other shops might keep your business from progressing.

It cannot be emphasized too strongly, that a person deficient in many of the desirable qualities mentioned can, if he has a real desire for the business and some natural aptitude, with study and sincere determination, be a successful florist.

III * *Educational Background*

FORMAL AND INFORMAL

The floral industry has three definite branches, namely: Culture, the cultivation and growing of flowers and plants, or production; Distribution, or the wholesale marketing of these products, and Retailing, or merchandising of flowers to the public. We are primarily interested here in the retail florist, although the other branches of the industry will be discussed briefly in relation to the flower shop.

Floriculture is a technical subject and several fine universities in this country have departments devoted exclusively to it, where students receive bachelor of science degrees after four years of study. Graduates of these schools occupy some important positions in the industry. The work of these men, the professors and the graduates, is of inestimable value to the entire industry.

M. Truman Fossum, assistant professor of floriculture at Cornell University, in a recent survey of the industry, calculates that the retail florists represented two-fifths of the total sales volume of the billion dollar horticultural specialties industry in 1946 and that retail florists employed about one-sixth of the full-time employees and accounted for nearly one-fifth of the payroll of employees.

OPPORTUNITIES EXIST

Although the retail florist is a small part of the total general business and industries of all kinds, there are real opportunities available to young persons in retail flower shops. Florists are really just beginning to scratch the surface of the potential markets for flowers through proper merchandising and distribution.

A great number of the florists today inherited their businesses

and learned the methods and operation while working with parents and relatives in greenhouses and shops. They have been doing a good job in most cases, because they grew up in the business. They had no place else to go in those days to secure the education for it. The outstanding error made by many of them is that of complacency: "What was good enough for father is good enough for me," or, "This is the way we have always done business and we have always made money." Many of those shops are losing ground today because wide-awake young men have opened shops in competition and have adopted modern methods of display, artistry and salesmanship.

Where is the young man or woman to go today to learn this business of being a retail florist?

The floriculture courses offered by universities place the greatest emphasis on growing. It is a valuable education, but not essential to the person interested only in the retail side of the picture. It is desirable, however, if the person is planning to be a grower and retailer both, as are so many florists today, particularly in the small towns and rural areas, where they operate greenhouses and sell their own flowers. Where that combination exists near larger cities the growing frequently is of primary interest, and the retail side is often a comparatively small proportion, because most of the flowers are distributed on the wholesale market.

LEARNING ON THE JOB

Many florists of today were trained for their businesses by working in flower shops. The apprenticeship method of education in the flower shop is by no means the ideal, but at present is the best available to the person interested in retailing flowers. The small businessman who operates a retail store must be many things—buyer, salesman, decorator, bookkeeper, advertiser, secretary, personnel manager, etc. It is obvious that the more a person knows about these things, the more successful he will be using them. If he studies any of them extensively, he will be likely to specialize in one of them, rather than enter the field on his own.

A good basic education is essential. A degree in business administration from any university would undoubtedly be the logical choice of the person who plans on being a retail florist. A course of one or two years in a business college after high school might be quite sufficient. Higher education can be very beneficial but unless the student has the right ideas and a practical mind, he might develop introvert tendencies rather than those valuable extrovert qualities which make a man or woman interested in other people—a trait so valuable in this business of being a florist.

Upon completion of his academic education, the student needs specialized study in the methods of operation of a retail flower shop. This book is intended to be of assistance to the person seeking such information. In addition to reading and studying, he must have a place to practice and experiment before opening his own shop.

TRAINING BEFORE OWNERSHIP

It is not recommended by the writer that others try starting as he did without any specialized preparatory study, unless forced by circumstances to do so. If at all possible, work as an apprentice for a year or more in a good retail flower shop. That shop need not be the largest and finest, because the apprentice is looking merely for the fundamentals.

The young man or woman applying for work as an apprentice at a nominal wage should be willing to do any kind of work in the shop. He will be observing while learning to do many menial tasks, which he later will be doing in his own shop. He should not be too proud to trim flowers, clean refrigerators, price stock and wrap packages, under supervision, if he expects to be welcomed as an apprentice. Unless he is willing to do these things as part of his training, he does not have the proper attitude and approach to this business. His earnestness and willingness in this respect will go far in his being accepted into the confidence of other employees and the employer. It will hasten the completion of his education as an apprentice. The best way in this, as in any other business, is to be-

gin at the bottom, working from the ground up. There is then only one way to go and that is up.

RESPONSIBLE POSITIONS

Men and women who have worked in shops as apprentices often stay in those shops and hold responsible positions. Many of them are perfectly satisfied and happy, receiving good pay for their abilities. Some of them are expert designers or department heads and managers in some of the large retail floral establishments; when the business grows to that extent, it can hardly be referred to as a shop.

These capable men and women who started as apprentices are happy today in the positions of managers or designers, without assuming the risks of ownership. It is also true that many of them would like to be owners, but are not financially able. It follows also that many other capable men would still be employees and not shop owners today if their employers had paid them salaries commensurate with their abilities.

THE DESIGN SCHOOLS

After serving a year as an apprentice, observing the operations of a flower shop and working with flowers, it may be desirable to take a course at a reputable school of floral design. The late Max Schling, Sr., New York, was one of the pioneers in furnishing summer courses in design work. The work he began has now been broadened and taken up by many other schools of this type. Since the war these schools have had a tremendous growth, because of the interest of veterans who are taking the courses under the G.I. Bill of Rights. The courses offered vary in length from four to eight weeks and cover fairly completely the subject of design in addition to lectures on salesmanship and general store operation. In these schools of design the student again has the opportunity of working with flowers and making up designs of all kinds under expert supervision.

A careful investigation and study of the reputation of various design schools and the competence of their staffs should always be

made by a prospective student. Upon inquiry, helpful advice may be secured from retail flower shops, wholesale houses and other informed representatives of the industry.

The writer recommends working as an apprentice in a shop before going to these design schools, because he believes the student will be so much better prepared for it and because he will have a much greater understanding of the work and be able to retain so much more of value of good design. If he has been doing some of the work in poor fashion, as an apprentice, it is a perfect chance to correct it and be shown by experts the proper methods. Students with whom I have discussed this matter have been in agreement.

Aside from the short course design schools, there are the design clinics given by state and national florists' organizations at their annual conventions, where some of the finest artists in the country demonstrate for their fellow florists, showing new ideas in the handling of flowers and materials. These clinics are generally one day refresher courses. Many flower shops send their designers to design schools to learn new methods in graduate classes, and to the conventions to keep up with the new ideas in flower design and style.

SELF-IMPROVEMENT COURSES

The florist in a large city also has the opportunity of taking night courses in colleges and universities on subjects which he deems will be beneficial to him. Among them might be subjects such as sales, business law, bookkeeping, sales promotion and merchandising, personnel and art. Art institutes offer courses in the study of color and design which would be helpful to any florist.

Much can be gained from reading and home study on these subjects in preparation for the retail florist business. Even the established florist should spend some of his spare time studying new trends in his own profession. The trade publications for the florist abound in current information and illustration of the best work and methods used by successful florists everywhere.

Observation of other businesses and their operation is of great value. Hints on display may be gained in window-shopping in your

own city and adapted to the florist display window and shop interior. The same is true of packaging and merchandising. The interior decorator in his work with color, line and design could be watched with profit by the floral designer.

The day will soon come when the universities offer a complete course of study of the retail florists' business. Colleges present comprehensive courses of study in dress design and style, mechanical art, interior decoration, illustration, ceramics, metalcraft, cabinet making, upholstery, furniture, fabrics, and every conceivable subject except the retail florists' business. With the steady growth of the industry and the demand by florists and the public for more education on the subject, the specialized courses of floristry are bound to follow. That course of study should include some business law, bookkeeping, art and color harmony, merchandising, display, design, personnel, etc. In my opinion, state and city florists' associations should advocate this program and set aside funds annually for promoting this course of study in state universities. This can be achieved through education of the public and the industry in particular and by working with the state legislatures in securing additional appropriations for that specific purpose.

Assuming that the man or woman having the desire to be a florist has the aptitude, ability and educational preparation, he or she is now faced with new decisions to be made, such as the type of shop, location, financing and business organization, if he plans to be his own boss.

IV * *Selecting the Shop*

LOCATION

An important factor in the success of any new business enterprise is its location.

Selecting the locale for doing business involves many considerations, too often overlooked by impulsive young people launching a new business. One of the first considerations should be climate, whether or not it would be to your liking and suited to your health and well being. The tastes of people vary as much in this as they do in other phases of living. Having determined whether it be the south, west, east or north, whether it is the part of the country in which you would enjoy living and rearing a family and whether it has the cultural advantages desired, there are other factors to be considered. One of those factors is the relative density of population compared with existing flower shops.

The smaller cities and towns may offer better opportunities for new flower shops than do the larger cities, which are fairly well covered and served by existing shops. There are smaller communities which could well support three or four shops, but have only one or two. Some of the existing shops are doing an unsatisfactory job of merchandising flowers and are not aware of the full opportunities of selling flowers. Competition of new shops in those towns would be welcomed by the population, as well as providing a challenge to the existing shops to bring them out of their complacency and compel them to be more alert to modern methods of merchandising and designing flowers. That same reasoning would apply to many districts and neighborhoods in the larger cities, but to a lesser degree, because a shop located anywhere in a larger city easily can furnish flowers to those districts and neighborhoods.

Life in the smaller cities is not as rushed and complex as that in the metropolitan centers. It is much easier for the newcomer to make friends and become acquainted with other business men in these communities. He has an added advantage if that city is his home town, because he will have a wide acquaintance and will know the trends and chances for his business success from first hand knowledge. Many men have left the hustle and bustle of large cities to settle down in smaller towns and find more happiness and success than they could possibly have expected from large cosmopolitan areas. It works the other way, too, because the small-town boy is often lured by the activities of big cities and has gone to one to make his home and business future.

The initial investment in the business in a smaller town would be less than in a larger city; cost of ground, rent, labor, material, services, etc., are much lower generally. This could, of course, be offset by smaller business prospects. As an additional source of business, however, many of these shops have agents or salesmen in adjacent towns which have no florists and the agents take orders for flowers and relay them to the florist.

TYPES OF COMMUNITIES

Before selecting the town a thorough study should be made of its social and economic life. A college town, for instance, might be better than an industrial one, because a college town would have more social life. The people in middle and upper class income brackets will buy more flowers than the low income group. The prospects for success in a steadily growing town are good. Another consideration should be the transportation facilities of the town, such as railroads and bus connections for shipping of merchandise and for receiving flowers from the wholesale markets.

TYPE OF SHOP

The type of flower shop contemplated will have a definite bearing on the location chosen. Flower shops fit into categories mainly be-

cause of their location, such as hotel, office building lobbies, department stores, downtown, neighborhood, suburban, highway, or terminal stations of interurban trains. The shop with a greenhouse or conservatory will of necessity be in an outlying district or small town, depending upon zoning restrictions and space required.

Hotel shops, in addition to general floral work, cater to transients and supply the hotel with decorations for the lobby, for parties, banquets and conventions. These shops vary in size from the small to large, often with workroom and storage facilities on another floor. Some hotel flower shops have proved to be outstandingly successful operations while others have ended as disappointing failures. The success or failure may stem from a number of causes ranging from the type and location of the hotel to the experience or personality of the operator. Observations and study of several hotel flower shops would lead to the conclusion that those shops are successful not primarily because of their location in a hotel building. The locations in themselves, regardless of the connecting hotel, would be desirable without considering the passing transient hotel clientele.

SPECIALIZED SERVICE SHOPS

Some shops limit their services to party and wedding decorations exclusively and do not furnish the other more usual types of floral arrangements. Other shops emphasize funeral and hospital designs, but do not do party and wedding arrangements. Most florists, however, do a general business, catering to that great middle class of flower buyers, and a relatively few shops cater only to the so-called carriage trade in smart shopping centers. The steady business of the good average shop is its own recommendation.

Many flower shops have experienced remarkable growth from the beginning because of the fine location selected, whereas others, often better equipped and staffed, have had years of struggle in building a clientele because of bad judgment in their choice of location. It should be borne in mind that the fine locations also carry with them proportionately higher rental rates, which is a large item in the over-

head operation of any new business. A shop located in a fine shopping center or on a well traveled thoroughfare will become well known often because of its location, rather than from advertising or excellent service.

A central location in the city has the advantage of convenience for deliveries in every direction. As about seventy-five per cent of the retail flower sales are those for hospitals, funerals and weddings, it might be well to consider a location convenient to hospitals and funeral homes.

Locations near postoffices or public utility offices, where a number of people enter daily to pay their bills, are generally desirable, depending on many other circumstances, such as parking, types of adjacent stores, display possibilities and general appearance and maintenance of the district.

Flower shops located on highways between densely populated sections do a large cash and carry business, and some credit business with regular patrons. They generally have drive-in facilities with off-the-road parking for cars, and usually carry a large line of associated gift items along with flowers and plants. Some of them have adjoining nurseries and greenhouses and offer a complete floral service.

CONSULT A REALTOR

Before making the selection of any location it is advisable to consult a real estate expert, who is able to give unbiased information and advice. He can make a survey of any location as to passing traffic and the potentialities of the district in regard to transient trade and resident customers. He also knows rental values and the advantages of other adjoining businesses. The local banker and chamber of commerce also could be interviewed for their opinions and suggestions.

After selection of the site, the condition and size of the building or storeroom should be examined. The exposures, plumbing, lighting, ventilation and convenient doors for loading and delivering, etc., should be adequate.

TRAFFIC

Many shops have succeeded in districts with practically no transient traffic and have built up a profitable clientele which places most of its orders by telephone on monthly charge accounts. Every shop has a great number of regular telephone customers, but the percentages vary with the locations and types of business. Some shops located at interurban or railroad terminals do a large cash and carry business in a small space. These shops are often called flower markets or flower stalls, because they sell flowers in bunches or bundles at low prices. Many of them handle a large volume at low prices, and rightly so, because of low operating costs and minimum service given.

The buying public falls into the easy habit of shopping at the most accessible and convenient places. The old adage about beating a path to the door of the man who builds a better mouse trap might be contradicted by actual experience. After a reputation has been established, the matter of location might not be so important because regular customers would follow the business regardless of location. This would be true only where the service has been and continues to be outstanding.

Before arriving at a conclusive decision on the locality and site for a flower shop each of the following factors should be considered:

1. Population; its character, occupation and income or buying power.
2. Competition; number of flower shops and kinds of other stores and their drawing power in the locality.
3. Traffic count; auto and pedestrian.
4. Transportation facilities.
5. Parking facilities.
6. Adaptability of space available.
7. Desirability of site in general and its proper use.
8. Future prospects, including the counsel of a realtor, banker and other business men.

SELECTING THE NAME

The names of many flower shops are chosen because of their location. Their names are so identified with their location that they are

found easily by the shopper, and in addition, they often carry with them the prestige of their namesake. Some examples of shop names selected because of their location are the Fifth Avenue florists, Madison Avenue Flower Shop, Baker Hotel Flower Shop, Washington Circle Florist, Union Terminal Florists, Pleasant Hill Greenhouses, Turnpike Florists, Forest Lawn Flower Shop, and Empire State Flower Shop.

Other names reflect the type of shop or a service specialty as follows: Cottage of Flowers, House of Flowers, Flower Mart, Flower a Day Shop, Floral Art Shop, Bon Voyage Florists, Bouquet Shop, Hollywood Gardens, Flower Basket, Flower Fashions, Drive-In Flower Shop, Little Flower Shop, Colonial Florist, and Modern Flower Shop.

A few shops select other names, such as Alpha Floral Company, Keystone Flowers, Imperial Flowers, Ideal Floral Company, and Criterion Flowers, conveying an idea of high standards or quality.

Other shops are named for flowers: Gardenia Florists, The Orchid Shop, Forget-Me-Not Shop, Camellia Florist, American Beauty Florist, The Fern, Rosebud Flower Shop, and Rose Floral Company.

A very great majority of flower shops, however, bear the names of the owners, for example: W. H. Kruse, Irene Hayes, Inc., J. Crissey, John Welter, Flowers by Dess Powers and Hess and Swoboda. The advantage of this policy is that the owner's name is always associated with the business and can be taken to other locations, whereas a name such as one of a hotel or street could not.

The arguments for and against renting and owning space for the retail flower shop will be discussed in a subsequent chapter under the subject of financing. I do believe that anyone beginning a new business should begin on a small scale and grow with the business whenever possible. It should be emphasized again, that it is good business to seek the council of a real-estate expert before making a final decision on the location of your flower shop.

V * *A Look at Finances*

How much money will it take to start a flower shop? How should it be spent? How much should be kept as surplus capital? What are the chances of financial success? These questions are difficult to answer specifically, but the discussion of these and other matters pertaining to dollars will enable us to arrive at some fairly definite conclusions.

UNSTABLE BEGINNING

An amazing commentary on retail flower establishments is that an infinitesimal percentage of them began with careful analyses of finances. Most of the people who are florists today just fell into the business after working in flower shops, because they thought they would like it; many of them began by working as extra help during holiday seasons, or they inherited the business after growing up in it. Too few of them began by sitting down and analyzing the business from every angle, and estimating the possible return on their investment. In addition to that, it can probably be said without fear of serious contradiction that the large majority of the businesses, including my own, were begun on the most unstable financial foundation possible—shoestring credit.

It is a wonder that there have not been more failures. M. Truman Fossum, in one of his recent surveys made for the industry, finds that a lack of capital is the cause of fully one-third of the business failures. However, it could be pointed out that flower shops weathered recent depressions better than most other small businesses. Florists, then, it would seem, have the stamina and fortitude to ride the sea of hard times, probably because they are able to adjust themselves easily to the stress of the times, as they adapt themselves within each year to high peaks of business volume in the winter and

spring months and the low valleys of business in the summer months.

The original investment required for a flower shop is not large compared to many other types of business. The amount of capital required will vary tremendously, depending on whether the business is to be in a leased storeroom or property purchased for the purpose. The reasons for and against a rental basis as opposed to ownership should be considered carefully.

RENTING OR OWNING

There are few florists' stores that begin in owner-occupied space, because of the lack of capital and because good judgment would warn any beginner to start with a smaller investment, even if the required capital were available. After a reasonable assurance of success and a few years of experience, a florist might consider purchasing property to house his business. Even then the question should have very serious study, weighing the cost of rent against the interest on capital investment in property, the added costs of upkeep, real estate taxes, changing values, depreciation, insurance and location. Would the costs of ownership add a much heavier burden on the operations expense of the business, and would the additional responsibilities be offset by savings and greater profits in the long run? In 1943 more than forty-one per cent of the flower shops were in owner-occupied locations and the remainder in rented premises, according to a report of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Rents are fixed on a percentage basis in most metropolitan shopping centers today. Generally the lease calls for a base rent and percentages on a sliding scale; for instance, the base rent might be \$300 per month based on a \$50,000 volume, with an additional five per cent on the next \$25,000 sales and seven per cent on all over that amount. Some leases are made on a straight percentage varying from four to ten per cent. Percentage leases are advantageous in that the operating expense percentage on this item is fixed; the amount of rent varies with the sales, to the comfort of the tenant in slack times and the joy of the landlord in boom times.

The average rent paid by florists generally amounts to about seven per cent of their sales; in other words, a florist doing a \$50,000 annual business could well afford to pay a monthly rental of \$250 or more, whether the lease be one calling for a flat rate or percentage of the sales. A new shop without any following whatsoever would not be likely to start in a high rent business district, unless the possibilities for a huge transient or drop-in trade were likely. A short-term lease, with renewal options is always advisable for a new shop, and this is generally agreeable with the landlord, who shares in the prosperity of his tenants.

BUSINESS CAPITAL

Business capital may be divided into three classes: 1. Fixed capital, or investments in land, buildings, fixtures and equipment. 2. Working capital, or merchandise for sale and accounts receivable. 3. Liquid capital, or cash in the bank. For the purposes of this discussion we shall assume that the property will be rented. What amounts then should be allocated to these three categories? On today's market what would be the reasonable minimum required? Let us say that we want to begin with a \$15,000 capital. That amount might be budgeted as follows:

1. <i>Fixed Capital:</i>		
Refrigerator	\$3000.00	
Other fixtures	500.00	
Equipment and tools	500.00	
Delivery car	2300.00	
	<hr/>	\$6300.00
2. <i>Working Capital:</i>		2000.00
Merchandise, pottery, ribbons, etc.		
3. <i>Liquid Capital:</i>		6700.00
Cash in the bank		<hr/>
		\$15000.00
Total		

The liquid capital or reserve cash in this case is a comfortable one. It should be equal to the anticipated expenses of doing business for at least six months, and include such items as light, salaries, telephone, rent, etc. These expenses should be carefully budgeted

and anticipated before making any capital investments. The margin should not be too narrow on the liquid cash balance, because the amount of that balance easily might spell success or failure of the business, with too much capital tied up in accounts receivable at the beginning.

In the hypothetical case of \$15,000 capital, the amounts would vary considerably if an established business were purchased instead of starting from scratch. In that case the purchase price could well be \$11,000 to \$12,000, leaving \$3,000 or \$4,000 in liquid capital. The reason for this is that an established business would have some good will and sales; in other words, there would be an income from the start.

BUYING THE BUSINESS

The records of that business would be available, and a study of the inventory and sales could be compared with the cost of doing business before making the capital investment. The reputation of the shop should be investigated carefully, because it might be more difficult to overcome a bad reputation than to start from scratch. Always bear in mind that the process of building up a profitable business is a slow one and that expenses are likely to be greater than income for some time.

The purchase of a going business has several advantages in addition to an income from the start. It is established; the equipment, fixtures and supplies can be appraised and inspected, and no time is wasted in opening, buying fixtures and equipment, decorating, etc., which would be quite a saving compared to the expense of equipping an empty storeroom.

The buyer should check carefully into the reasons the seller gives for putting his business up for sale to make sure that there is no hidden handicap, such as bad location, mismanagement or false representation of sales records. It might be advisable to check the income tax returns of the seller. Here again, as in the case of selecting a location, the advice of an expert should be sought before making the purchase and taking over the unexpired term of the lease. It

would be expedient to secure the counsel of a reputable florist to assist in arriving at a decision as to the value of the shop and its prospects.

When a business is purchased, the buyer is buying the good will as well as the stock and should secure from the seller a written agreement to the effect that he will not for a period of time reenter the business in competition. Otherwise the value of the good will might develop into a crippling loss. Always consider the return on your investment and the value of your own labor when you examine a sales record and the profit percentage.

Credit arrangements can be made for the purchase of equipment and fixtures to be paid in monthly installments; if this is done, the liquid cash reserve should be increased proportionately. Above all things, be sure to anticipate all expenses before making the initial investments. Even a good cash reserve is no cure-all or insurance of success. So much depends on other factors that make a business ring the cash register.

Anyone considering the florist business as a vocation will be interested in the accompanying charts made by M. Truman Fossum in his survey of a few years ago:

ANALYSIS OF RETAIL FLORISTS' BUSINESS IN THE U.S.

	1929	1935	1939
Number of establishments	9,328	11,242	16,055
Proprietors and firm members	10,015	10,976	16,074
Number of employees	27,874	17,320	23,128
Salaries and wages	\$30,760,016	\$15,964,000	\$22,641,000
Operating Expenses	\$63,341,678	\$36,724,000	—
Sales	\$176,200,880	\$98,718,000	\$148,741,000

ANALYSIS OF VOLUME OF SALES

	1929	1935	1939
	Number of Establishments		
Less than \$10,000	4,654	8,266	11,483
\$10,000-\$19,999	2,050	1,697	2,718
\$20,000-\$29,999	1,035	620	826
\$30,000-\$49,999	876	415	619
\$50,000-\$99,999	529	138	253
\$100,000-\$299,999	164	34	53
\$300,000- and over	20	—	1

It will be remembered that 1929 was a year of high prosperity; 1935 was a low period, and 1939 was average. Notice particularly some of the facts brought out by a study of this analysis. Wages and salaries amount to practically one-half of the total operating expense, and the operating costs amount to about one-third of the total sales. In a later chapter the subject of records, operating costs and percentages will be discussed in detail.

In 1939 only about one-third of the flower shops were doing a business above \$10,000 annually. Note also that about 5,000 were new shops opened after 1935. The average number of employees was less than two per shop. It is obvious from these charts that there is little concentration of wealth in a few hands in this business.

At the present writing another complete census of the floral industry is being made and will furnish a picture of the business for the past ten years. Certainly the figures have changed during the war period, and it is estimated that the total sales in 1944 were close to \$250,000,000. Mr. Fossum in a recent study stated that retail flower sales in 1947 exceeded \$625,000,000. There is no reason why we should be content with this record, because we can build our business to an even greater volume. The new florist with the proper education and business ability can better the record made by florists in past years, both in volume and individual income.

CHANCES OF SUCCESS

What are the chances of financial success as a florist? We can say that there are few wealthy florists in the country, but there are many happy ones making a comfortable living for their families. Considering happiness and the satisfaction of doing well the work that he enjoys, the florist is a wealthy man and the envy of his friends.

The possibility of gaining financial success is one that depends entirely on the person. The opportunity is great, if the sound principles of good business are applied as they should be in this as well as other businesses. Unfortunately, too many florists have been working for their businesses instead of making their businesses work for them. They have been reinvesting all of their money in their

shops. Then, too soon, comes the time for retirement and old age, and the shop is not paying a good income and would bring little on the market. What a pity it is that those good people did not work for themselves part of the time!

SAVING

Systematic saving is a part of any good business operation, and every proprietor should have a carefully scheduled savings plan. The first bill I pay the first of every month is that check to my savings; I consider it the most important obligation to myself and my family. Much as I love my business and the work, I am still working for John Liesveld and not for the shop I own. That to me is good financial management and applies to every employer and every employee in any business.

May I make another personal reference to the handling of money? It is my sincere belief that generous and unselfish tithing to one's church and other charities is a good business practice. In addition to the satisfaction gained from unselfish giving, the law of compensation, which works in business as well as personal life, returns dividends far greater than purely mercenary investments.

As a last word of caution in handling the finances of your business, do not obligate yourself too heavily with borrowed money or installment buying. Your knowledge of finance and credit will make you conscious of the value of a good credit reputation.

In spite of the emphasis we have placed on money in this chapter, please remember always that your greatest assets are your character and ability. Remember, too, that it is possible to succeed with those assets in spite of a poor financial foundation, but that path may be rough.

VI * *Legal Types of Ownership*

Closely allied with the subject of financing is the legal type of business organization. In the previous chapter the discussion was devoted primarily to the financing of a sole proprietorship, and although the same general principles would apply to any form of ownership, there are certain financial advantages to special types of ownership.

An important consideration in the beginning of a florist's business is the type of ownership and the legal obligations involved in the enterprise. There are many legal liabilities attached to the privilege of ownership which should be understood thoroughly.

There are three general types of ownership: the individual proprietorship, the partnership and the corporation.

INDIVIDUAL PROPRIETORSHIP

Most flower shops are begun as individual proprietorships, although there are cases in which it might be found advantageous to begin as a partnership or corporation. It is not unusual after beginning a business, to change the type of ownership from one form to either of the other two. The reasons will become apparent as the legal implications and advantages or disadvantages of each type of ownership are briefly described.

A business which is owned by a single individual is a sole or individual proprietorship. This is the most common form of ownership wherein one person usually operates or manages the business to his sole profit. This type of business organization may be begun without the formality of legal documents used by partnerships and corporations. The owner is solely responsible for the risks of his business, and rightly so; with the right to all the profits also goes the legal personal responsibility for all the debts of the business. That re-

sponsibility does not end with his investment in the business, but goes beyond that to include all of his property with the exception of his home in most states. Many of the liabilities assumed with the ownership of a business may be covered by insurance, which will be discussed in another chapter.

PARTNERSHIP

A partnership is a form of organization founded on a contract between two or more persons to combine their money, effects, labor or skill, or some or any of them in business, with the agreement that the partners share the profits equally, or in certain proportions set out in the agreement. It is generally essential in this form of ownership that they share in the profits. It is hardly possible to form a definition that would meet every case. In some instances the agreement may be verbal instead of written, and may have any number of partners. A married woman may be a partner of her husband in some jurisdictions, although a corporation may not be a member of a partnership.

One partner acting for the firm binds all of the other partners, and each partner assumes unlimited financial liability for the debts of the business. For that particular reason, partnerships are not so common as sole proprietorships and corporations and exist generally in family businesses. There is the danger of friction between partners in their actions pertaining to the business, because of the liability of all of them for the actions of one.

A partnership may be dissolved by mutual consent of the partners, or by action of the court on the complaint of one of the partners on proper grounds, such as fraud. Partners have a right to insist that accurate accounts be kept of all the transactions of the firm, and legally they have access to the books at all times. Any change in the membership of a partnership effects a dissolution, and if the business continues it is a new firm.

The term of existence of a partnership is generally set up in the partnership contract, but the death of a partner may dissolve the business to the loss and detriment of the other partner. However,

insurance may be carried by the partnership to assure the surviving partner a full interest in the business, while the estate of the deceased partner would receive the insurance money.

There are instances where partnerships are operating smoothly and profitably, because each of the partners has different abilities and aptitudes, each necessary to the business. The case of an artist-designer and a business man as partners in the florists' business is a good example. By pooling their capital and skills they are able to operate a better and more profitable enterprise than either of them could individually. When they have a definite agreement and the willingness to cooperate congenially and without friction, they have the essentials for a successful partnership.

CORPORATION

A corporation is an artificial person created by law, in a charter issued by the state, giving it a name in which to do business, own or convey property, sue or be sued. It is normally managed by a board of trustees or directors and officers. Its powers are those given by its charter. Its existence continues notwithstanding the death, withdrawal or insolvency of its members, or the transfer of shares, if it has a capital stock divided into shares. Its rights and obligations are its own, and not those of its members. Its creditors must look to it and to its property alone for payment and not to its members, unless they have not paid for shares or have wrongfully appropriated its property. For this one reason, the corporation is often the preferred form of ownership.

The business capital is realized through the sale of shares of stock in the corporation. The capital stock can be increased at various times as required through the sale of additional shares. In this respect the capital of a corporation can be increased more readily than in the case of a partnership or proprietorship.

The law usually requires the purposes, name, place, capital stock, amount subscribed, number of shares and the names of incorporators or subscribers to be stated in the application for incorporation, which must be signed and acknowledged in a specified way by a certain

number of incorporators and then filed, recorded or registered in designated public offices. Other provisions as to organization, powers, voting, meetings, transfers of shares, reports, amendments, dissolution and winding up are usually found in the general laws. These and the application, executed as required, become the charter and have the effect of a law and a contract.

The corporation laws of the various states differ in many respects. It is obvious that the amount of legal detail would require the assistance of a lawyer. The law imposes upon corporations special taxes and requires more detailed financial records and certain reports to the state.

The corporation is a more permanent form of organization than the individual proprietorship and the partnership. It is also easier to transfer the ownership of a corporation, either in whole or in part, through the sale of its stock. The persons who operate the business are usually paid salaries by the corporation. The profits of the business are paid in the form of dividends to the stockholders of the corporation, in proportion to the amount of stock owned by each.

Many of the larger flower shops today are corporations, and often some or all of the employees of those shops have a real interest in the business in that the officers have permitted them on occasion to buy shares of stock or have voted them certain shares as bonuses for good service, etc. The fact that an employee has an interest in the business, even though it be small, can be of inestimable value in greater efficiency and morale. This end may also be accomplished in other forms of ownership through various profit sharing plans which will be described in the chapter titled 'Hours and Wages.'

An attorney may recommend a certain type of ownership, or a change from one type to another, solely on the basis of tax liabilities. This is particularly true in the case of federal income tax where the rates applied to individuals, partnerships and corporations may vary considerably. In any circumstance involving the investment of substantial capital and the assumption of new liabilities for a flower shop, a good lawyer should be consulted.

VII * *Taxes, Licenses and Regulations*

Florists and other businessmen are inclined to revolt at the mention of taxes or governmental regulation of matters pertaining to their lives and businesses. The lawmakers, as well as the voters who elect them, are agreed that these laws are necessary and presumably beneficial, but when a man's pocketbook is touched in the enforcement of those laws he is not too happy with the consequences. The attitude of trying to avert paying taxes honestly due does not bespeak a genuine interest in good government nor the principles of democracy.

The repeated unsuccessful attempts to evade taxation have necessitated the increasing expenditure of tax money collected to enforce the laws and make the correct collections. The chisellers make the process a more expensive one to all.

The subject of taxes is as important as it is unpopular in the budget of any business. A knowledge of tax liabilities and other governmental regulations imposed by law will spare new florists some big surprises. Ignorance is not an acceptable excuse for non-compliance.

The following definition of the word "Tax" is one in which every word is significant: A tax is a compulsory contribution from the person to the government to defray the expenses incurred in the common interest of all, without reference to the special benefits conferred.

Taxes may be classified according to the branch of government to which they are paid: Federal, State, County, Local or Municipal. The metropolitan flower shop may have as many as twenty-five different direct taxes to pay each year which might include the following: federal and state income taxes, social security taxes, unemployment insurance taxes, city and state real estate taxes, merchant and per-

sonal property taxes in both city and state, automobile taxes and licenses, occupation license taxes, sales taxes, etc.

INCOME TAX

The largest and most important tax, because of sharply increasing rates in recent years, is the federal income tax. Many of the states also have income taxes. These taxes, based on income, are one of the many vital reasons why every business, large or small, should keep an accurate set of records; without a complete set of books showing all transactions, income cannot be computed.

Workers in the bureau of internal revenue and their investigators report that small business men are most negligent in bookkeeping and that, in many cases because of the absence or inaccuracy of records, their incomes and the taxes thereon have to be estimated. This process is painful because of the added penalties and means a larger tax than would have been owing had definite records been kept for correct computation.

March 15 every year is not now the unpleasant experience it used to be, because federal income taxes are paid on a cash basis in advance through deductions from payroll checks. The taxes for businesses are estimated in advance, and quarterly payments are made, with a final annual settlement on or before March 15 on income of the previous year ending December 31. The florist, having had a rushing holiday business followed by St. Valentine's day with Easter approaching, is often inclined to push out of the way much of the detail in annual reports of his business in the easiest fashion and fails to give his income tax return the attention it should receive. Through carelessness and hurry, mistakes are made. The tax may be overpaid or underpaid, with errors so gross and obvious that revenue inspectors will ask to audit the books. The bureau of revenue has percentages figured on various business operations in different localities and can tell at a glance whether a business, in the report of its expenses and profits on the return, is out of line with the average for this type of enterprise. If there is much variation, the return should be questioned.

UTILIZING DEDUCTIONS

The governmental tax agencies now are furnishing more understandable guides and explanations of their tax forms and advising the taxpayer more explicitly of the deductions allowable. The florist who takes advantage of all of the deductions allowed by the law is playing the role of a good businessman. Study and effort to reduce the amount of income tax through legal deductions are entirely ethical, as contrasted with the actions of the businessman who tries to conceal his true profits.

The Supreme Court of the United States has ruled that a taxpayer may resort to any legal methods available to him to depreciate the amount of his tax liability, so long as his efforts are confined to law. It should be remembered that all deductions must be explained in detail and supported by definite records of the expenditures. The man who bases the figures in his tax return on that kind of evidence can rest comfortably.

Partnerships do not pay separate income taxes, but each partner pays taxes based on his individual share of the income, the return being supported by an information report of the partnership agreement. Special forms are used to report corporation income, and, in addition, the stockholders are liable for income taxes on stock dividends and salaries or wages paid to them by the corporation.

EXAMINATION OF TAX RETURNS

Many flower shops have their income tax returns prepared by an attorney or tax expert, because the savings on the amount of tax more than pay the fee for that service. On any examination of the return by authorities, the attorney will answer for his client to the bureau of revenue. However, he can answer only for the accuracy of computing the return and its various deductions; other questions as to the amount of income naturally will have to be answered by the shopowner who made the records upon which the tax was computed.

Practically every flower shop has had the experience of answering

questions of tax authorities pertaining to income tax. In my own experience I have found the examiners fair in every respect. Once through a miscalculation my income tax was overpaid a few hundred dollars and the overpayment was refunded with interest by the bureau department a few months later. During the years when I prepared my own tax returns errors were made three consecutive years before they were discovered by the revenue bureau. In spite of my legal education, I had overlooked and misinterpreted some of the instructions and was obliged to pay the increased taxes, plus interest and penalties. My ignorance and neglect were paid for in hard earned cash. Since then I have employed an expert at those matters to prepare my income tax returns. The complete set of books is handed to him every January, as soon as the final entry is made for December, and the totals entered. My attorney and his auditor then handle the important tax detail of business with dispatch and at reasonable cost.

WITHHOLDING TAX

The businessman has another obligation under the federal income tax law. He is the collector for the government of income taxes on wages paid by him to all of his employees. Under the pay-as-you-go plan, the correct amount of the tax due from each employee is deducted from his salary and paid to the government quarterly. Tables of the tax liabilities, instructions and official forms are supplied by the local office of the collector of internal revenue. Payroll books and records pertaining to withholding this tax must be available for government inspection.

SOCIAL SECURITY ACT

Another federal law, the social security act imposes certain taxes covering two programs, old age and survivors' insurance and unemployment compensation. This act applies to any retail flower store having one or more employees.

OLD AGE AND SURVIVORS' INSURANCE

The old age and survivors' insurance tax is levied upon the payrolls, and both the employer and employee currently are taxed 1½ per cent of the first \$3000 of each employee's annual wages. The employee's part of the tax is deducted from the wages paid. This amount, plus the same amount due from the employer, is paid by the latter to the bureau of revenue quarterly on official forms which contain detailed instructions.

UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION TAX

The unemployment compensation tax is paid to both the federal and state governments and must be paid by all retail flower shop owners employing eight or more persons during each of twenty weeks during the year. This tax, not to be deducted from wages, amounts to three per cent of the first \$3000 in wages paid to each employee during the year, of which 2.7 per cent is paid to the state government quarterly and the balance of .3 per cent is paid to the federal government annually. Special forms and instructions also are provided for this tax. In some states there is a tax of this kind where fewer than eight persons are employed.

FEDERAL EXCISE TAX

The federal excise tax laws apply to only a very few of the flower shops, namely those which sell perfume, jewelry and other gift items taxable under the act.

SALES AND RECEIPTS TAXES

The florist also acts as collector for the state governments which have sales taxes or gross receipts taxes. These taxes are based on a percentage of the sales or receipts, usually one or two per cent, and are passed on to the customer and collected with each purchase. The taxes collected generally are paid to the state revenue office each month or in some cases on a quarterly basis. This tax is not generally applicable to sales where the merchandise is delivered to another

state. It must be collected, however, on all telegraph orders sent to other florists, even if out of state. The sale in that case is considered consummated with the sending of the order, by telegram or letter or telephone. In other words, sales taxes are collected on interstate orders at the point of origin. The ignorance of this technicality has proved expensive to many florists, who, after examination of their sales tax records by state auditors, were obliged to pay sales taxes on hundreds of orders on which they failed to make the sales tax collections from the customer. Again, the necessity of detailed records of every business transaction becomes apparent.

OTHER LOCAL TAXES

In addition to taxes, local governments require the issuance of certain licenses, such as the occupation license, which necessitates the payment of an annual fee, often based upon the amount of sales or gross receipts. The regulations and laws of different states and municipalities vary in so many respects that a detailed discussion of them would be impractical. Some of them which would apply to florists are wage and labor restrictions, zoning and building codes, safety and health regulations, fire prevention and traffic laws.

For information in regard to the many state, city, county and local taxes and regulations, the florist should contact the various government offices having jurisdiction over his location.

VIII * *Insurance*

SAFEGUARD TO BUSINESS

Whether you are now operating your own business, buying an established business or starting a new one, a well planned insurance program is a necessity, a safeguard against catastrophic losses as well as smaller financial losses which without insurance would be a source of constant anxiety. To predetermine from what sources the losses may occur is impossible.

Some freak accidents experienced by florists have been embarrassing and often costly to them or their insurance companies. For example: An oriental rug and imported wallpaper were soiled by the toppling over of a tall pedestal arrangement of flowers, part of a reception decoration; a white ermine fur wrap was stained from flower dye on a corsage; dripping aisle candles damaged a fancy feathered hat worn by one of the guests at a wedding; a wrap was scorched and burned by candles used in a cocktail party decoration; a plaster figurine used by a florist in a ballroom setting fell from the wall, causing a severe spinal injury to a guest; an imported rock crystal bowl, which had been arranged with flowers, was broken by a florist's delivery man; a florist's truck was pushed into a plate-glass window by another truck which went out of control on the street. In some of these cases the florist involved was covered by insurance. In others, the injured party had proper insurance to compensate him for the loss, but in a few cases the florist was obliged to pay for the loss or damage in the absence of proper insurance coverage.

PUBLIC CONFIDENCE

Insurance today is an integral element of our social and commercial life. Public confidence in insurance has been gained and tested

through centuries of experience and has resulted in making it a necessary consideration in the operation of any business. Almost every man considers insurance in some form of protection as a social obligation to his family and the public. The importance of insurance is indicated by state laws, which require some types of insurance to be carried. It is also common business practice for banks and creditors to require prospective debtors to have adequate insurance of certain risks for protection of capital assets.

It is impossible to set forth a fixed insurance program for florists, either as to cost, type of coverage or limits of liability, because of the variance in type and size of operation, geographic locations of shops and greenhouses and statutory limits in various parts of the country. However, it is possible to outline briefly the various kinds of protection available and pertinent to the business, as a general guide to assist in checking and outlining an insurance program.

THE INSURANCE COUNSELOR

The average insurance buyer is inclined to think of probabilities, rather than possibilities. Regardless of its probability, an uninsured loss could deplete business assets disastrously. Adequate insurance will give the florist protection for his employees, his customers, his own property and the public. It is one of his best guarantees for staying in business and will give the added peace of mind which comes by removing many of the risks involved.

The small businessman too often carries an assorted group of various kinds of insurance policies in his safe which he has purchased in hit-and-miss fashion from salesmen who have called on him. I was one of those same businessmen a few years ago, having an assortment of policies. With the growth of business involving more employees and more responsibility I realized that it was time to have my entire program reviewed by an insurance counselor who would advise me impartially. That man, a friend in whom I had complete confidence, examined all of my insurance policies and made suggestions which resulted in my employing him to handle all of my insurance problems. It was a difficult step to take, because of the

fact that I had several good friends and customers who were equally competent. The florist learns soon that it is not possible to reciprocate business with all of his customers. If he tried doing that, he would have several doctors, insurance men, grocers, lawyers, etc., each handling the small dribble of business he could place with them, without any of them knowing what the others were doing. The result would be that none of them could give efficient and complete service.

If, for business or personal reasons, it is desirable to have other agents or brokers in addition to the insurance counselor, all of the insurance problems and purchases should clear through the counselor's office. It is his responsibility to understand the operations of your shop and offer or provide you with the best protection available. That responsibility becomes your own when you deal with several agents, because they do not have an opportunity to know of inconsistencies and duplications of coverage in your insurance.

The counselor in his analysis of the florist's insurance assures maximum protection at minimum cost without duplication of coverages; provides a survey of insurance rates with recommendations; suggests savings possible with the purchase of longer-term contracts; provides appraisals of building and contents value; provides a visible record of insurance contracts with expiration dates and keeps the program up to date with a complete picture of all hazards and exposures.

The trend in insurance has been the development of a new broad form of comprehensive policies. The more limited form policies, out of which these contracts grew, have assumed less importance and will not be discussed here in detail. Premium costs will vary, depending on circumstances and locations. Various insurance coverages may be classified, according to the protection of the following: 1. Physical assets; 2. money and securities, 3. members of the public, 4. employees, and 5. life.

The following outline will give a brief description of coverages possible according to classification:

1. PROTECTION OF PHYSICAL ASSETS:

Fire insurance insures building, contents, fixtures, etc., in specific amounts against direct loss or damage by fire or lightning including destruction of building by civil authority to prevent further advance of fire from neighboring property. Smoke or water damage resulting from any fire occurring on the premises or adjacent property is also included.

Extended coverage endorsement originally known in many states as supplemental contract, covers property for the same amount as the fire policy against all direct loss or damage caused by windstorm, hail, explosion, riot, riot attending a strike, civil commotion, air-craft, vehicles and smoke. This form reads into the fire policy to which it is attached the afore-mentioned hazards wherever the word "fire" appears.

Vandalism and malicious mischief endorsement with the extended coverage endorsement extends the policy to cover loss or damage to glass, or loss caused by explosives, theft, burglary, larceny or pilferage.

Contingent liability from operation of building laws form covers loss resulting from the enforcement of any state or municipal law or ordinance which necessitates, in rebuilding, the demolition of any part of the insured building not damaged by fire.

Rental value insurance form protects the building owner against loss of income where rentals have been interrupted by occurrence of any of the hazards insured against, while the property is being rebuilt or repaired.

Leasehold interest form for tenants protects against loss caused by having to rent property at a higher cost in the event his lease is cancelled as a result of the occurrence of any hazard insured against.

Consequential loss or damage form covers loss to a store operator resulting from shutdown of public utility or other contributing plant as a result of the occurrence of any hazard insured against. It is important that this clause be included in the policy form or by endorsement.

Inventory-iron safe clause requires the insured to keep annual inventory and to keep a sales and inventory record in a fireproof safe during hours the store is not open for business and is applicable only in some territories and small towns for fire policies.

Reporting form insures stock, furniture, fixtures, improvements and betterments. If annual fire premium, exclusive of extended coverage endorsement, is more than one hundred dollars annually, and supplies of stock show marked seasonal variation, a reporting form may be used to advantage.

Sprinkler insurance insures against all direct loss as a result of leakage, freezing, or breaking of sprinkler installations.

Coinsurance endorsement is advisable where an accurate valuation of the property insured can be made because it results in substantial savings in carrying an agreed proportion of insurance to value. When it is attached to the aforementioned policies, the florist becomes a coinsuror for the amount that the insurance carried is less than the coinsurance percentage agreed upon. Reduced to the simplest terms, by allowing a rate credit, the insurance companies expect the policy holder to carry insurance to some named percentage of the value of the property covered. If the value of the property is \$10,000 and the policy contains the eighty percentage coinsurance clause, the policy holder is expected to maintain eighty percent insurance to value or \$8,000. If this is done the insurance company will pay 100 percent of the actual value of the loss.

Unearned premium insurance reimburses the holder of fire policies, including endorsements, for the unearned remainder of premium, after the policy has been terminated or reduced by an insured peril in the property insured, which is important where large premiums are involved.

Water damage insurance covers all direct loss or damage caused by accidental discharge, leakage, or precipitation of water or steam, but not flood damage.

Earthquake insurance covers loss by earthquake and is carried generally in areas where earthquakes have occurred.

Electrical signs insurance insures against all direct loss or damage, except loss of use, strike damage, internal explosion or blow-out, short circuit, wear and tear, deterioration and damage sustained while being worked upon.

Glass insurance insures replacement of show windows and structural interior glass accidentally broken or damaged or purposely broken by vandals or thieves, including supporting frames and bars and cost of lettering or ornamentation or a cash payment covering actual cost of replacement.

Boiler and machinery insurance covers damage to both the insured objects and to the property of the insured, caused by the accident described in the schedule, or schedules, and also protects the insured against liability for damage to the property of others directly caused by the insured's accident. The policy also may be extended to include liability because of bodily injuries to persons other than employees. Valuable inspection service is included. This coverage is especially applicable to florists operating greenhouses where boilers are used.

Off premises explosion insurance is often overlooked and covers loss due to damage to the insured's property by explosion of boilers, pressure containers or machinery not owned, leased, operated or controlled by the

insured and not on any premises owned, leased, operated or controlled by the insured at the time of the explosion.

Mercantile open stock burglary insures against burglary of, and damage to, merchandise, furniture and equipment at florists' premises or warehouse. Visible marks of forcible entry are required.

Mercantile open stock theft coverage may be added to a mercantile open stock burglary policy and insures against theft of merchandise, furniture and equipment on the premises or warehouse. Visible marks of forceful entry are not required.

Accounts receivable insurance covers direct loss resulting from inability to collect money from customers provided such inability is directly due to destruction or damage to records of accounts receivable while in the premises.

Valuable papers insurance covers loss or destruction of valuable papers, notes, records, or customers' lists.

Business interruption insurance (use and occupancy) reimburses merchants for profits that would have been earned if fire or other hazards insured against had not occurred, including reimbursement for necessary continuing expense.

Automobile comprehensive insurance insures against loss by reason of fire, theft, windstorm and many other causes, except by collision or upset of automobiles. This is the broadest coverage of its kind available.

Automobile combined additional coverage insurance is sometimes written on trucks in lieu of the comprehensive policy, but is a limited form contract. In addition to insuring against loss from fire and theft to the automobile, it covers loss from windstorm, hail, earthquake, explosion, riot or civil commotion, or forced landing or falling of any air-craft or of its parts or equipment; flood or rising waters, external discharge or leakage of water, except loss resulting from rain, snow or sleet.

Automobile collision insurance insures against loss from collision or upset of motor vehicles. This coverage is usually written with a \$50 or \$100 deductible clause.

2. MONEY AND SECURITIES

Comprehensive dishonesty, disappearance and destruction policy is highly recommended for florists with four or more employees and those with a cash and check exposure of \$500 or more. It provides all risk protection for money and securities on and off the premises caused by dishonesty, mysterious disappearance or destruction. It also insures against loss due to dishonesty of employees, loss of money and securities within

or without the premises, damage done to premises and equipment, loss of securities in safety deposit or forgery of outgoing instruments. This policy has five insuring agreements and may be written singly or in combinations best suited to the particular business.

Storekeeper burglary and robbery policy provides seven different coverages under one contract and is designed especially for the smaller business with a limited number of employees whose cash and check exposure is so limited that it does not feel justified in purchasing broader coverage. The policy provides insurance against inside holdup, outside holdup, kidnaping, safe burglary, burglary from night depository or residence of custodian, store burglary of merchandise only and damage to shop's stock and fixtures. It can be written in a single unit of \$250, \$500 or \$750 on each of the insuring clauses.

Messenger and interior robbery insurance is a limited form protecting shopkeeper against robbery, loss of money, securities and other property from his custodian, either within or without the insured's premises and reimburses for resultant property damage. It covers pay roll, deposits and other funds.

Mercantile safe burglary policy covers loss by burglary of money, securities and merchandise from within merchants' safe or vault, including damage to safe and other property of merchant (except by fire) resulting from burglary or attempt thereat.

Money and securities (broad form) policy protects against loss of money or securities caused by destruction, disappearance or wrongful abstraction within or away from premises except dishonesty of employees, war or forgery. Safe burglary, interior and messenger protection for property other than money are provided.

Fidelity Bonds for employees who handle money or merchandise indemnify for loss due to embezzlement or wrongful abstraction of money, securities or other property. Four fidelity bonds are available: Individual, name-schedule, position-schedule and blanket.

Depositors and commercial forgery bond protects against loss from forgery of bank deposits or checks, draft notes or other written promises or orders to pay.

3. OBLIGATIONS TO THE PUBLIC.

One of the major sources of catastrophe losses to the florist is his liability to the public as a result of the operation of his business. Careful consideration should be given to adequate limits of liability under this type of protection. The insurance agent, counselor or attorney should be consulted

because of the variance in judgments rendered and the statutory death limits in various parts of the country.

Comprehensive general and auto liability policy insures against all declared existing liability hazards, plus unknown hazards occurring during policy term, arising out of building, premises or business operations. This policy and automobile policy if written in the same company might prevent overlapping coverage on delivery operations. The coverages listed below are included but products and contractual liability may be eliminated if desired.

Owners', landlords' and tenants liability insurance insures bodily injury and property damage liability to the public for both premises and operations.

Elevator liability policy insures bodily injury and property damage to the public arising from use of elevators.

Contractual liability insurance indemnifies from liability assumed under contract. Most common agreement is in assuming responsibility of city for injury or damage resulting from signs projecting over sidewalk or from liability assumed under leases.

Products liability insurance protects from loss due to claims arising from bodily injury or property damage caused by the use of any product sold by him.

Automobile liability insurance covers loss due to bodily injury and property damage claims arising from use of automobiles. In addition to owned automobiles, this may be written to include nonowned and hired automobiles.

Medical payments endorsements to general liability policy provide for payment of necessary medical, surgical, ambulance, hospital, professional nursing or funeral expense to, or on behalf of, any person injured by an accident covered by the liability section of the policy to which the endorsement is attached. This coverage applies regardless of the liability of the insured. Attached to the automobile liability policy, it pays hospital, doctors, medical expense and funeral expense, if necessary, up to the limit of liability in the contract resulting from any accident causing injury to persons riding in the insured's car, including the insured.

Storekeeper's liability policy is ideal for small retail florists without greenhouse operations. This is a single limit policy covering both bodily injury and property damage and also medical payments without additional charge and provided for coverage on and away from the premises, products liability, and liability arising from damage caused by any exhibit that the insured may have during the period away from the premises.

4. OBLIGATIONS TO EMPLOYEES.

Insurance for protection from liability for injuries to employees is advisable. A single accident to one employee could cause a large financial loss in addition to giving the business the reputation of failing to protect its employees. This liability may be insured under workmen's compensation and employer's liability policies.

Workmen's compensation policy insures loss due to statutory liability as the result of personal injury or death suffered by employees of the shop in the course of their employment, providing compensation in amounts prescribed by law. This insurance is mandatory in most states for a varying minimum of employees, usually three or more, unless the employer can show financial responsibility to pay compensation to workmen injured or killed in the course of their employment.

Employer's liability insurance covers loss resulting from legal liability as a result of injury to employees not eligible for workmen's compensation who suffer injury or death in course of employment. It may also include medical, surgical and hospital services. Lawsuits are defended and costs paid by the insurance company.

5. LIFE INSURANCE.

One of the objectives of business is to create an estate and to provide old age security for ourselves, families and employees. There is no surer way to accomplish this than through a well planned life insurance program.

Personal Insurance would provide funds sufficient to insure preservation of the business assets either by continuation of the business or profitable liquidation. If an adequate cash balance is not available at death of the owner, it might not be possible to continue the business, and a forced liquidation with resulting loss to the heirs might result.

Business Insurance in partnerships and corporations in conjunction with buy and sell agreement retires a deceased's interest and assures his heirs of a full book or predetermined value and permits surviving partners and stockholders to continue the business intact and unhampered. It guarantees a settlement satisfactory to all concerned.

Mortgage and creditor protection is the insurance of a permanent amount automatically reducing each year, conforming to the terms of a mortgage or loan. Loan agencies frequently require insurance in an amount at least equal to the loan. Even without this requirement a loan or mortgage should always be covered by insurance in order that the business may have a fair chance with a new operating head.

Keyman and deferred bonus or pension plans policies protect the busi-

ness in the event of the death of a valued employee or takes care of that employee upon retirement. This applies particularly to larger florists and in cases where the operating head is not the entire owner.

Annual and single premium annuities may be used as a savings account for retirement purposes for owner or employees.

The reading of this chapter would make anyone aware of the complexities of insurance and indicate the wisdom of employing an insurance representative of good reputation to handle his insurance program. Earl T. Scott of Kansas City, Missouri prepared this valuable outline of various insurance coverages with the unselfish attitude of being glad to be of service.

IX * *The Shop Front*

SIGNIFICANT IN MERCHANDISING

The front of the shop is as valuable to the florist as is the facial expression of an individual to his personality. The distinctive character of a store exterior will make its imprint on the eye of the passerby. If he can look at that front and see beyond its facial make-up in window display into the shop interior, it will make an even deeper mental impression.

An effective and appropriate shop front is significant in retail merchandising. Appearance is of such great value because the sense of sight is more than five times stronger than the other four senses combined. That fact alone is sufficient justification for the study and investment necessary to make the front of the flower shop appealing and inviting to the customer.

FUNCTIONAL ARCHITECTURE

Commercial architecture has made great strides in recent years, and in every respect the advance and influence have been functional, making the merchandising process more serviceable and convenient to the customer. The good architect presents good design based on pure logic. Every flower shop design should be viewed in this light, rather than that of personal fancy. It should be pointed out that the best architects and store designers are the reputable ones who are capable and anxious to secure the best results with small budgets.

Store modernization has been spreading with the availability of more materials. The florist seems to be reticent in taking up these great improvements which would transform a store at a minimum of cost. In that respect he is out of step in many localities with other progressive merchants. His store front is often prominent and con-

spicuous in that it is dated and outmoded. In many instances, a good coat of paint or a thorough washing and a few more bulbs to light his windows would do wonders. It can be said to his credit, however, that the frosting does not always make the cake. Some of the most beautiful floral work comes from the shops with the most uninviting fronts; the converse is also true in some instances. Both shops could increase their business substantially by placing more emphasis on plans to transform their deficiencies into business assets.

Planning the shop exterior is restricted considerably in a rented site, whereas the florist erecting his own building will have much more leeway in planning its outside physical appearance. The first consideration of the florist building his own shop is the style of architecture which will best suit the surroundings and the type of business he is planning, whether it be a retail flower shop with greenhouse or small conservatory attached or just a retail shop without the facilities of a greenhouse or landscaping department with garden equipment, supplies, etc.

HARMONIZING BUILDING STYLE

The style of architecture which best fits the site and harmonizes with that of other buildings in the district is, in my opinion, the one to be preferred. The shop can be outstanding for that reason, or it may be conspicuous because of the fact that it is an orphan, or misfit, in the district or neighborhood. Either one of these buildings would attract attention, but the one which shows the best taste certainly would not be the orphan, which after the newness wore off might be looked upon as a monstrosity. Too radical departure from accepted types of architecture might lead to that unhappy end.

The flower shop may be built in any style of architecture, and the exterior or front may be constructed of any available material—glass, stone, wood, metal or plastic. The design of that construction should be one that reflects the good judgment of the florist who is the merchant of beauty, design and sentiment in flowers. Certainly a florist building his own structure would not erect a Spanish-type building in a district which was predominantly colonial. Successful

real-estate operators and planners of shopping centers are cognizant of the great value in keeping their districts beautiful through the employment of one style of architecture, whether it be modern, English, Spanish or colonial.

SIGNS

The florist who is renting his store space is generally prohibited in the lease from making extensive building alterations. Usually his greatest investment in the front of the premises is the installation of a street sign bearing the name of his shop, and through this he can add style and character to the most ordinary store front. The kinds of signs available and the materials used are as varied as the colors in the spectrum. The installation of a street sign or name is an investment in permanent advertising. The type of lettering used and the trademark or emblem should be repeated on the flower boxes, stationery and printed advertising. Above all, that sign should be legible. Bear in mind that the vertical sign is more difficult to read than is a horizontal one. City ordinances might prohibit overhanging street signs or might restrict the use of certain types of lighted signs.

My personal taste in signs is a conservative one, opposed to brightly colored neon or anything garish, because it detracts attention from and mars the beauty of a floral display. This opinion is definitely a minority view, perhaps because my shop is located in a district where overhanging, neon and colored electrical signs are prohibited by lease.

Many shops, including my own, have no large outside sign, but only window lettering or a door nameplate. These signs are usually placed about eye level for the convenience of pedestrians. This is particularly true of hotel and arcade shops.

If the shop exposure requires window awnings, it is imperative, because they are so conspicuous, that the right selection of color, material and type of awning be made to fit the store front and floral displays. A feature exterior decoration can be made of the awning, although most often it is the one thing that receives the least aes-

thetic consideration. Shop names are often placed on awnings, both front and side.

DISPLAY WINDOWS

The most important feature of the front of a flower shop should be that of window display area. The current trend of commercial architecture in this respect is the open front; in other words, the entire shop is considered the front and is open to view from the street. In some cases the window display area is separated from the sales area by grilles or a variation in the floor level. In other instances the entire shop is also the window or display area, all on one level with window glass extending from wall to wall and from floor to ceiling.

Thermopane glass for flower shop windows is recommended for insulation against cold and heat. It has the further advantage in that it will not steam nor frost in cold weather. The installation of this glass might be considered even in a rented space, because over a period of time it would pay for itself in the saving of heat in winter, air-conditioning power in the summer, clear window glass for display in all kinds of weather and less waste in flowers from weather exposure through ordinary plate glass. Thermopane now has been on the market a sufficient length of time to prove its value and practicability.

ENTRANCES

The entrance to a flower shop should be inviting. The door or doors should permit as much vision as possible. In the past few years the employment of extremely thick plate glass, without frames, for store doors has become popular. The door should always be easy to open and should be on the street level without steps up or down. The more accessible and convenient the entrance is to the shopper, the more likely he is to enter. Clean swept walks and surroundings, free from litter and rubbish at all times, are their own obvious recommendations.

For the store front which is narrow compared to its depth,

mirrors on the side walls from floor to ceiling in the window and store area will create the illusion of a store twice as wide and will afford a reflected view of the store to the pedestrian before he reaches the window or store proper.

Recessed store fronts, some of them with a lobby effect, afford the florist innumerable possibilities for display. Beautiful plants and gardens may be used in these areas and changed with the seasons. In some cases a neat hedge is effective, and in others urns arranged with plants make the entrance and approach appealing. This is particularly true of drive-in shops and others in localities where there is available outdoor space for landscaping of some kind.

Correct illumination of the flower shop is a prime requisite in the display and merchandising of flowers and will greatly affect the interior view of the shop by night. As a matter of fact, effective use of available lighting technique can transform an ordinary floral display into one of amazing beauty. Floodlighting of the building at night might be appropriate and a worthwhile investment for beautification and advertising.

BARRIERS OR INVITATION

Remodeling plans should be in keeping with the type of floral business and the type of its clientele. Some shops might well lose some of their customers by lavish remodeling and decoration. A luxurious store front in a popular low income shopping district might prove to be a barrier to continued patronage of that shop. It is for the florist to decide, when planning his store front, what class of trade he wishes to attract to his shop. Here, again, the middle road is the safest one.

The shop front should be harmonious and in keeping with the theme, color and feeling of the interior decoration whenever possible. Whether the project is one of remodeling or building a new store front, it must be planned with an eye to the possible expected return on the capital invested in the project. Will the investment make your shop a place which reflects your ability, displays your

flowers better and makes your shop inviting to more customers, who will for those reasons buy more flowers from you?

In making plans for your shop exterior it would be well to bear in mind that the shop front is just a picture frame for your shop and its display of flowers and accessories.

X * *Floor Plan and Decoration*

Even with proper financing, a perfect location and a beautiful store front, it is still possible to encounter rough sailing, simply because sufficient study was not given to the subject of an efficient floor plan and an appropriate background for flowers and merchandise. Poor shop layouts and unattractive displays are often contributing causes to poor sales records. No one can deny that efficiency of operation requires a planned store interior from front to back. Nor can it be argued that flowers are not more beautiful if they are shown and displayed in the proper settings.

The prime consideration after the selection of the site or storeroom is that of allocation of space for the various activities involved in the operation of a flower shop. How much space should be given to sales, office, wrapping, designing and storage? The florist who is planning his own building generally can arrive at a near ideal in this regard, because he is not bound by four walls and certain dimensions like the florist who is renting space. In spite of the limitations in rented space, however, a great number of florists after careful study and experience have worked out ingenious plans utilizing irregular quarters to better advantage than florists working from blueprints for new buildings.

SALES AREA AND WORKROOM

The area for salesroom and workroom will vary greatly, depending upon the type of shop and its contemplated policies. A number of flower shops find that the policy of having work tables at the rear of the sales area, in open view of the shopper, is desirable because of increased interest on the part of customers and greater convenience for the workers who do both sales work and designing. Other shop owners claim that efficiency is hampered because of interruptions in

the designing of flowers and unnecessary conversation of customers with designers. In this plan, they also prefer to have the clutter and rubbish which accumulates around work tables entirely separated from the sales area. Both plans have their advantages, but observation would indicate that most florists have found the policy of a separate workroom is more favorable.

The size of the workroom will depend also on the volume of business done. For instance, some established shops have a comparatively small sales area, but require a large working area to deliver a large volume of floral work. Generally speaking, a workroom should be at least as large as the sales and display area. If the site has a basement or second floor, that additional space may be used for storage and an auxiliary workroom for particularly busy days.

Many of the flower marts have very small spaces or stalls without storage facilities or separate workrooms, because their flowers are sold in bunches and wrapped for the waiting customers.

It should always be remembered that a florist can do a large volume of business in a small shop because of the constant turnover of flowers and the daily or twice-daily replacement of stock from local wholesale houses in the large cities. The fact that a shop is small is no indication that it is not equipped to offer a complete floral service. Visits to various floral shops will soon convince anyone that the large shop is not always the convenient, efficient and prosperous one.

CONTROL CENTER

A small but vitally significant spot in any flower shop is the control center, or office. That space is the nerve center of the floor activity, including the handling of orders, sorting them for make-up at certain times, addressing of tags, etc. The telephones, cashier's desk, bookkeeper's desk and office equipment are often located in this area. In some stores the bookkeeping and order taking are segregated and not included in the control center. There again, the volume of business might be a determining factor. It is obvious that the area required for these activities may differ. In a small shop one person

might handle the control center single-handed and require space for only a desk and cash drawer. In larger shops that activity might require several desks, files and telephones.

Some of the newer shops also have consultation rooms, where customers may be seated to plan flower decorations for weddings, funerals or other important occasions. These rooms enable the salesperson and customer to make plans without the interruption and the interference of other shop activity.

An important factor in the appearance of a flower shop is the valuable space given to window display. The depth and height of the window display space depend largely upon the architectural plan of the building or room. If the entrance is recessed, the windows are shaped accordingly. The open front windows of the newer type extending to the floor make the display area tangible and the whole shop interior a part of the window display. The enclosed display window is preferred by many decorators, in that it enables the designer to make a complete picture of the window with various backgrounds and lighting effect without the interference and distraction of the color, lights and objects of the sales area.

THE OPEN FRONT

Some shops with a long street front or corner locations have the opportunity to have some enclosed or picture windows and niches for display, plus other open windows to permit a view of the interior. The designers in favor of the enclosed window backgrounds have a good argument when they state that the passersby, upon seeing a lovely display, will be all the more desirous of entering a shop to see what is behind the attractive windows.

The trend in merchandising today, however, is away from the distinctly enclosed window display with a solid background, because experience has demonstrated that a less restricted view of the shop interior is more inviting and conducive to a second look and a stop. The only separation of the window display area and the salesroom is often just a difference of floor level or a separation made by the installation of a rail, screen or grilles.

The flower shop should have a pleasant atmosphere, and the floor plan and the mode of decoration and color will do much to accomplish that end. The floor covering may be one of many materials. Most practical and popular among them are asphalt tile, linoleum or rubber tile. Carpeted floors have not been practical for the average flower shop, because they become water stained and soiled. Rubber tile, extremely durable and obtainable in a wide range of colors, may be laid in very striking patterns or special cutout designs. Because of its resiliency, it has the added advantage of being more comfortable for the salesperson, who will not become footsore so soon.

The color and pattern of the floor covering should be neutral because of its permanency. The colors of the walls and other decorations may then be changed from time to time, affording the store an entirely new look. The size and shape of the sales floor will be the determining factors in deciding whether its covering should be plain or patterned.

The choice of wall color will depend greatly on the store exposure and the amount of daylight or the lighting equipment installed. Plain colors and painted walls are preferred in flower shops, although some beautiful effects may be gained with the use of striped or geometric-patterned paper on some wall areas. A dark color for the shop with a north exposure and little window light is not so cheerful as a light color. A light ceiling and floor, however, will do much to offset the dark walls. Above all, the color should be a neutral one, which provides a good background for flowers of any hue. Several years ago flower shops were either ivory or green in interior color scheme. Today, florists and decorators have found that many other colors and much deeper tones can be used more suitably to create smarter backgrounds. Black has been used to good advantage on fixtures and display cases to give added accents.

Color combinations that have been used in recent flower shop decoration to create unusual effects and good floral backgrounds are dark brown with beige; deep green, with lighter green or chartreuse; deep purple-red tones, such as eggplant, with white accents, or dark grey with pale grey and white accents. Caution always should be

exercised in the use of extremely dark colors, because they may give the room a heavy, gloomy atmosphere and throw the interior completely off balance.

Proportions of a room can be changed by colors, and in every case the work should be done by a decorator and under the guidance of an artist who knows color value and balance. Most experienced florists have great ability in this regard, and many of their shops reflect this knowledge in their beautiful interiors. The atmosphere they create through the use of color and the settings for their floral displays are often outstanding.

DECORATION A CRITERION

One serious criticism is that too few of the flower shops today are fair samples of the artistic ability florists have for sale. Where, if not in the flower shop, should the public find real beauty, a pleasing atmosphere, good taste and correct color combinations? How can the florist honestly undertake to do floral decorations for others when he does not have his own house in order?

Making the excuse that we are too busy to plan and decorate our own shops is a flimsy alibi. We should all exemplify more pride, ambition and ingenuity in our own places of business, not just for our personal satisfaction, but because it will mean more business through an increased demand for flowers in our more perfect shops.

It is advisable in planning a floor layout to make accurate scale drawings, placing each item of furniture and each fixture in place on that drawing before making any permanent alteration of wall and area allotment. Color and style of the fixtures should fit the general theme of interior decoration. Every shop has a feature or two in its decoration which gives the interior its character or feeling. That feature may be a console table and mirror of period design, or it might be a section of display shelves in a modern motif. It might be an antique love seat, with a table and lamp, or it could be a wrought-iron grille and stairway, or many other things. The other decorations could well take their inspiration and color from these

special features, giving the shop a modern, colonial, Moorish or other period atmosphere.

EFFICIENCY AND COMFORT

The workroom should be planned with utmost care for utility and comfort of the employees. Acoustical ceilings are a great help in keeping the workroom quiet. The walls should be light and cheerful. The worktables should have ample space for the work to be done. Adequate space should be provided for convenient use of all equipment and supplies. A floor opening with a chute, into which rubbish and waste may be swept, is handy and saves many bends of the back in keeping the workroom floor clean. The sink and water supply should be centrally placed. More detailed consideration will be given to fixtures, equipment and supplies in later chapters.

If the site, space and circumstances warrant their use, it is advisable to have a built-in storage refrigerator and garage where delivery cars may enter to load and unload. An elevator or dumbwaiter is a footsaver and timesaver.

Where there are several employees, basement or second-floor space could be provided for their relaxation in rest periods and lunch hours. Modern sanitary toilet facilities should be available and in easy access to the workroom.

Space must be allotted for wrapping of packages, routing of deliveries and unpacking and preparation of incoming stock. A bench for soil storage and utility in planting dishes and containers should be considered. Often the walls of the workroom are used for shelving, upon which extra materials and supplies are stored.

Adjacent to the workroom, upstairs or downstairs, the general storage area should be planned for the orderly placing of off-season supplies, surplus bulky stock vases, extra accessories, baskets, wedding and window props, holiday decorations, etc. Common sense dictates that this space should be dry and clean for the protection of the materials stored.

Before planning or replanning the flower shop interior, it is

recommended that other flower shops and stores be visited. If you are a florist, you will be glad to be helpful to others. If you are planning to become a florist, you will find that good florists are indeed friendly and helpful individuals, who will make suggestions and be glad to have you make a thorough study of their shops. A shop owner is always flattered by the interest of other florists in his operation. This method of taking a busman's holiday is always a fruitful one and certainly one of the best ways for securing new ideas for the improvement of our own business.

XI * *Fixtures and Equipment*

The prime considerations in outfitting any retail store today are function and beauty in all fixtures and equipment. The modern merchant puts emphasis on perfection of operation, demands the utmost in utility and wants to have the most attractive design and color in every piece of equipment and furniture he buys for his store. Not too long ago, the main criterion was that of function and utility, but recent merchandising experiments proved that beauty is also a requisite.

The florist, whose merchandise in itself is beautiful and colorful, will attach particular importance to the design of his fixtures. The color he chooses most generally will be a neutral shade to give a proper background for all colors in flowers and accessories. The wise buyer also will insist on practical and useful fixtures of good quality.

Various pieces of equipment, in the legal sense, become fixtures when they are attached to the building, walls or floors and thus become part of the real estate. Built-in refrigeration, air-conditioning, heating, lighting and plumbing equipment, when installed or annexed, become part of the building and cannot be removed by a tenant at the expiration of a lease. For that reason many leases have a clause giving the tenant permission to install and remove certain fixtures, such as refrigerators, built-in cases, shelves, air-conditioning equipment, etc. Often this right to remove certain fixtures is granted to a tenant in writing by the landlord. A tenant should always be sure to have this agreement in writing before making installation of fixtures, unless his lease specifically provides this protection to him.

REFRIGERATION

The most important fixture in a flower shop is the display refrigerator, a necessity in almost every section of the country for the

preservation and proper storage of cut flowers. Mechanical refrigeration is used almost exclusively today, although most florists in business still remember the regular daily chores of re-icing their display cases. A great many of those same sturdily built cases are in use today, equipped with electrical refrigeration.

The size of the display refrigerator will depend upon the anticipated requirements of the flower shop. Because of the considerable expense involved, most new shops open with a small compact unit which can be traded in on a new larger case when the business requires more cut flower storage and display.

In enlarging and remodeling plans of established businesses the display refrigerator generally is custom-built to fit certain areas and to harmonize with the shop architecture—in many cases the front being flush with the wall. Compressors generally are located in the basement or at the back of the shop.

Florists' refrigerators are kept at temperatures ranging from 45 to 50 degrees Fahrenheit, for conditioning and retarding the growth and development of most flowers. When florists have several refrigerators, they are kept at different temperatures and humidities for flowers and greens.

Some installations have large walk-in refrigerated rooms for storage of flowers, foliages and made-up designs. In a few establishments floral arrangements of all kinds are kept in a large, refrigerated, glass enclosed room, into which the customer and salesperson may enter to make selections and purchases of specific designs ready for delivery. Other shops have storage boxes or rooms for excess stock in the basement or workroom, in addition to display refrigerators in the salesroom. Some boxes are built so that the front half is used in the sales area and the back part of the case opens into the workroom for accessibility and convenience of the designers and for additional storage.

Generally speaking, 300 to 400 cubic feet of refrigerated storage space should be adequate for a \$10,000 to \$20,000 annual business; 400 to 600 cubic feet for \$20,000 to \$40,000 business; 600 to 900 cubic feet for \$40,000 to \$75,000 business, and 900 to 1500 cubic

feet, a \$75,000 to \$150,000 business. Note that as business volume increases the refrigeration needed does not increase proportionately because of a greater turnover and faster moving stock of flowers. Refrigeration required by larger businesses will vary, depending on their methods of operation and distances from flower markets.

Several reputable companies specialize in the manufacture of florists' refrigerated display cases and fixtures. They can be relied upon to furnish quality material, expert workmanship, durable finish, the best of mechanical installation and accurate technical advice.

The florists' refrigeration expert can be of great assistance in recommending the type of installation best suited to any flower shop. He knows the value of high humidity and slow air circulation. Sliding doors and triple thermopane glass are now available in florists' display cases. Cold cathode light, immune to moisture and cold and not distorting flower colors, is recommended. Highly polished stainless steel is being used instead of mirror backing, because it is a permanent reflector and non-breakable.

Because a refrigerator is an expensive fixture, the florist might be inclined to be too conservative when purchasing refrigeration. Too many of us have been penny wise and pound foolish in this respect. Crowding of flowers in a display case can often cause sufficient spoilage and loss in broken and bruised flowers at the end of a year to pay the difference in cost between the small and next larger case. An overcrowded display refrigerator is neither appealing nor satisfactory as a sales potential in attracting the consumer, nor is it practicable in the handling of flowers by the florist.

LIGHTING

Compared to other merchants, florists generally are oblivious to the real value and sales possibilities of modern and adequate lighting. A casual survey prompts the observation that most florists are more aware of recent developments and modern design in other fixtures and appliances than they are of proper illumination systems. The 25-watt incandescent bulb, suspended from the ceiling over a work-table, and the hanging globe-covered chandeliers in flower shops

should be relegated to the days of horse-drawn delivery wagons and oldfashioned ice boxes.

In recent years, however, some new and modernized flower shops have installed the latest systems known to illumination engineers, whose technical knowledge and advice are available for the asking at power and electric company offices everywhere. If more florists realized it, they would transform their shops merely by lighting them properly. Not only would their merchandise take on new beauty, but colors would stand out in their natural brilliance. The general atmosphere of the shop would be more inviting, and floral arrangements will take on added glamour and appeal in properly lighted settings. Those are things which make bigger totals on the cash register.

Not many years ago there was a scramble for fluorescent lights as the solution for all lighting problems. They have proved to be unsatisfactory in many situations and have since been discarded or augmented with other equipment. No hard and fast rule can be laid down as to what is the best lighting for a florist's shop, because so many factors such as area, color, shape of room and effect desired, have to be considered. Both direct and indirect lighting may be combined, and effectively so, with the use of both incandescent and fluorescent bulbs. Strategically placed spotlights set flush with the ceiling, with adjustable swivel sockets, are effective in flower shops to highlight certain displays or arrangements. Neon cove lighting has been used along with direct spotlights to good advantage. The light company engineers and architects can recommend solutions to every lighting problem in any shop.

The value of well lighted display windows cannot be overemphasized. Here, again, the florist has a special problem, because the heat radiation from strong spotlights in a small concentrated area will cause the rapid development and wilting of flowers. The same applies to refrigerator and display case illumination, where cold cathode lamps should be used. In windows and special displays the floral artist can create unusual and interesting effects by experimenting with colored slides over flood lamps to attract added attention and comment from passersby.

When the electrician is planning the lighting and wiring of a shop, he should always include a number of well placed electrical outlets, or wall plugs, which might be needed occasionally for movable auxiliary lamps, vacuum sweepers, floor polishers, electric turntables, electric fountains, radios, cash registers, desk lamps, clocks, lighted signs, etc. Recessed lighting for display shelves, niches and shadow boxes are used commonly in shops, because they are not only more decorative when well lighted, but they are also positive sales promoters.

Far too little attention is paid to appropriate lighting for the workroom and office, where many employees of the flower shop spend most of their time. To me that installation in the workroom is more valuable than in the sales area, because it means better health, better vision, better dispositions, better workmanship and greater efficiency on the part of every employee. That equipment need not be elaborate in appearance, but it should furnish no-shadow illumination of adequate intensity, without any color distortion of flowers or accessories. The lighting expert can save many dollars and headaches for the florist in the workroom, if he is consulted in the beginning—not after months of trying and discarding various lighting equipment.

Although an effective lighting system is a substantial expense, and in spite of the fact that the system becomes part of the building when installed and is not practically removable, the florist could bank on it as a good investment if his lease permitted him to use it for only a period of five years. In that time it would more than pay for itself in increased sales and efficiency. If the florist owns his building, sound business judgment would dictate the necessity of investing a good sum for the finest lighting equipment obtainable.

AIR CONDITIONING AND HEATING

Air conditioning has in recent years become standard equipment in retail stores, except in the few cases where architecture makes the installation practically impossible. Mass production of small room coolers has brought down the cost to such a point that most small shops during the summer months have air conditioning from compact units

which require little if any plumbing or sheet metal work. Larger flower shops, realizing the value of comfort to their customers and employees and protection to their flowers from extreme heat, have installed systems costing thousands of dollars. In many cases, the same air-circulating ducts and fans in the heating system are used for the cooling of air in the summer. That often is economical and practical when a new shop is being equipped, although the ducts used are larger than those required for heat only.

The compressor, coils, blower, etc., may remain the property of a tenant by written agreement with a landlord to allow their removal at the termination of a lease, although ducts and plumbing pipes and electrical wiring remain as part of the building, because removal would necessitate too much defacement of the property.

Special heating equipment and other fixtures used by conservatories and greenhouses, often operated in conjunction with flower shops, will not be discussed in detail. That technical information can be secured from any builder of greenhouses or from authoritative books on that subject.

Heating equipment in rented shops generally is furnished by the landlord. In larger buildings, with several shops or offices, heat from a central system is furnished. In some cases air conditioning is furnished in the same manner. Of course, the rent charged is proportionately higher to compensate for these utilities.

Hot and cold temperature engineers should be consulted by the florist, and he should emphasize to them the importance of maintaining a higher than usual humidity for the better preservation of plants and flowers in his shop.

Florists who have air conditioned shops are enthusiastic in their praise and would not consider returning to the hot workrooms of years ago, where flowers wilted almost as rapidly as did the collars and dispositions of the designers. They have noticed, too, the appreciation on the part of their customers who come in to shop. Often the customer will linger longer than usual in the comfortable cool air and in doing so be attracted to additional purchases.

SALES AREA EQUIPMENT

The tables, shelves and stands required in the sales area should be simple in design and color. Their design and style should harmonize with other fixtures and the architectural theme of the shop. The florist is more fortunate than other merchants in this regard, because his requirements are few and simple.

Wall shelves, plant stands, a small table or two and a desk or stand for writing cards are minimum requirements. As the business increases, other shelves and stands may be added. Often console tables and heavier shelves are built in and decorated to harmonize with the walls and refrigerator.

The space allotted for writing cards has many variations. It may hold a small desk, with a card rack and chair, or a counter, at which a number of customers may stand to write their cards. Sometimes the desk and card rack are custom built and have spaces above and below for display of plants, vases and floral arrangements. This type is preferable, because it serves a dual purpose. Most florists prefer the stand-up counter or desk, because it keeps a customer from sitting to visit or chat with friends or salespersons thus preventing the use of the desk by other customers.

Comfortable chairs should be available for waiting customers. At least one sizable mirror should be convenient for the ladies who wish to pin on their corsages or adjust their wraps.

A variety of stands for foliage plants, wall brackets, metal, glass-topped tables and shelves, sconces, etc., may be purchased at supply houses specializing in equipment for florists.

A simple electrical installation, which may save many steps and avoid confusion without distracting the attention of customers, should be considered by every florist when the workroom is separate from the salesroom and display room. In the sales area, a few well placed push buttons operating a buzzer or bell in the workroom are ideal for signaling another salesperson to assist waiting customers.

FOR THE WORKROOM

The workroom fixtures and equipment should be selected and placed for the greatest convenience of the workers. Hours of careful study on the floor plan and visits to other florists' workrooms will prove profitable.

A deep sink with running water should be centrally located. Where there are several worktables, an overhead water pipe with a separate hose outlet for each table, is a time-saver making water available for vases, baskets, etc.

All work tables should have a waterproof top, with a non-reflecting finish, black linoleum or rubber being the most practical. Metal or tile are not recommended, because of the danger of chipping glass and china vases. The height of the designers' table will vary according to the wishes of the worker, thirty-six inches being most desirable for the average person. The width of the worktable should be at least three to four feet, giving the designer ample working space for larger designs. Many designers prefer working at a table behind which a mirror is placed to reflect their work from the opposite direction. This is a good idea, because every design should look well from any angle. The mirror is also very convenient for the designer to use in working for correct lines and proportions in bridal work. It will also make designers and salespersons conscious of their own appearance, which is important when they meet the public.

Where floor space permits, a 5 x 8 foot table will prove to be useful when placed in the center of the working area. A table of this size furnishes space for several workers during rush periods. It also is a boon when large pieces, such as casket blankets, are being made, because there is ample room for several designers to work on the one piece from all sides.

Each designer's table should be fitted with drawers for his tools and racks or holders for wires, picks and other materials. Shelves under the tables or wall shelves beside or above them are needed for containers, paper, boxes, wire, ribbons and other supplies. All corsage materials should be accessible to the counter, table or bar where corsages are made. Seldom-used ribbons, nets and other materials

belong in enclosed drawers or on shelves for convenient workroom storage. Racks for shipping, cut flower and design boxes and holders for foils, papers, rope and tape should be within reach of a wrapping table.

If the workroom floor is cement or tile, rubber mats should be provided for each worker. Any worker who spends most of his time standing deserves that small consideration for his comfort and increased efficiency. Stools also should be available for work that can be done as well in a sitting position, such as wiring and stemming flowers and making corsages.

In larger shops, a certain section of the workroom is used exclusively for trimming and unpacking flowers. Under the tables used for that purpose, plan the space for refrigerator vases and have price tags and labels within easy reach. Refrigerator vases should be of one design and neutral color, so that the display will show off the flowers for sale without attracting attention to a conglomerate assortment of vases of all shapes and colors.

In shops which have stockrooms for storage of extra accessories, vases and other materials, tables and racks are needed for unpacking and pricing of shipments of pottery, gift items, and supplies of all kinds. Ample tiers of shelves or racks for the stockroom should be built specially to suit the type of extra stock, such as hospital vases, baskets, wire design frames, candles, etc.

In a back corner of the workroom or basement, provision should be made for installation of a sink and counter, with bins for pulverized, fertilized soil to be used by the person whose task it is to plant dish gardens and design plant arrangements. Racks are needed for holding extra foliage plants and receptacles to be planted.

If the shop has a basement, an opening at least eighteen inches square should be provided in the work room floor under one of the tables for rubbish disposal. Waste paper, stems and refuse can be swept into this chute, which may be made of canvas or metal. This rubbish can be carried out daily in barrels, burned in an incenerator or placed in a built-in waste disposal unit.

There are other laborsaving devices, such as dumbwaiters or eleva-

tors connecting with the basement or second floor, which can be utilized in the flower shop workroom. Stemming and picking machines, a soldering iron, a pressing iron, stem cleaners and trimmers, pot washing equipment, and a compressor with spray for painting or waxing flowers, foliages, etc., are other items which might be used in flower shops and added to the equipment as the need for them arises.

A radio in the workroom is a good morale builder and often relieves tension on a rushing day, when employees are working early and late.

Coat racks or lockers for employee's wraps and personal packages should be provided. Some shops which are not easily accessible to lunchrooms also furnish a gas or electric plate, and hot or cold drinks are served free of charge to workers who bring their lunches.

MAINTENANCE EQUIPMENT

When outfitting the modern flower shop, it is well to consider more than the mere broom and mop for the janitor work. Modern fixtures and floors will look better and last longer if cleaned and waxed in the proper manner with convenient equipment. Consider the purchase of an electric vacuum cleaner and waxing machine for tile, wood and rubber floors. The vacuum cleaner will save much dust settlement on flowers and accessories regardless of the shop in which it is used,—and the various attachments are convenient in cleaning ledges, moldings, shelves, etc. This equipment will save time and labor for the porter and give him time to assist in many other duties, such as packing and unpacking merchandise and acting as a helper for the designers.

Near the back door or loading dock should be a sizable table for outgoing deliveries or wide shelves with considerable space. The designers can place completed arrangements on the shelves out of the way of other work until the finished pieces can be loaded into the delivery car. Small trucks, station wagons or passenger cars may be used for flower deliveries. This subject will be covered more fully in the chapter entitled "Deliveries."

OFFICE EQUIPMENT

The flower shop office might well begin with only a small desk, one telephone, a ledger and a cash box. As the business grows, a cash register will be needed, then a typewriter or two, with files, other desks and chairs and more telephones. Then with more business, a safe, bookkeeping machines, addressograph, adding machines and even an intercommunication system might be added.

CONSULTATION ROOM

If a consultation room is included in the floor plan, it should be outfitted with furniture much like that used in a living room. It would include chairs, a table or two, lamps and draperies. These rooms generally are used for the planning of parties, weddings, receptions, family flowers for funerals, when the customers especially appreciate privacy and quiet. The table might be equipped with glass and light for the projection of color transparency photographs or might hold a projector, with a screen for enlarging color slides of flower arrangements to show interested groups. Scrap books and clippings with photographs of made-up pieces should be handy to give buyers a more definite idea of the work being planned for them. Florists who have worked in consultation rooms would not be without them. Such a room also is convenient when you are buying merchandise or looking at samples.

PROPS FOR DECORATIONS

A list of the many props and decorative pieces a florist might use in his work would be almost limitless. Some of the most used pieces are articles used in wedding decorations, such as floor candelabra, aisle standards, fern stands, urns and a kneeling rail, or prie dieu. These items are supplied by a number of firms and are available in a wide range of styles and colors. The beginner should be cautioned that it pays to look for sturdy construction and simple design when buying pieces of this kind. Buying quality equipment always will prove to be more economical in the long run.

Pedestals, screens, stands and props of various kinds to be used

in window and shop displays can be purchased as the occasion arises. It is advisable to buy a few new items each year and rotate their use in many different ways by spraying them different colors. Some florists buy expensive articles of this kind, use them for a season and then sell them at a reduced price to florist friends at other cities, giving them the opportunity to buy different ones for later displays and decorations. Cooperation of this sort enables the florist to compete effectively with the large department stores, where thousands of dollars are spent annually for handsome display props.

FITTING THE BUDGET

The initial investment in fixtures and equipment is a substantial part of the planned budget for opening a flower shop. Keeping that investment in line is difficult for the enthusiastic florist who is desirous of having a beautiful shop. Even the experienced businessman doing any building or decorating on today's market is fully aware that final expenditures are generally much more than the contemplated budget for that purpose.

Before leaving this subject, it might be worth while to fit our expenditures for fixtures and equipment into the budget suggested in Chapter V, "Finances." That suggested minimum appears in the accompanying table.

<i>Fixed Capital:</i>	
Refrigerator	\$3000.00
Other Fixtures	500.00
Equipment and tools	500.00
Delivery car	2300.00
	<hr/>
	\$6300.00
<i>Working Capital:</i>	
Merchandise, Pottery, Ribbons, Etc.	2000.00
<i>Liquid Capital:</i>	
Cash in the Bank	6700.00
	<hr/>
	\$15000.00

The minimum requirement of \$6,300 for fixed capital, of course, did not contemplate investment in air conditioning and heating equipment and several items discussed in this chapter, but it did include other necessary items. Location of the shop, local conditions and size

of the shop certainly would affect the budget requirements, but for the purposes of our discussion here, let us assume that the flower shop was in rented space, with heating and general lighting equipment furnished. Assume, also, that the sales area was twenty by twenty-five feet in size, with a separate workroom of the same size with connecting doors on the same floor; that the floor was black and white asphalt tile, that there was a full basement and that the walls were painted by the landlord in colors selected by the florist.

It is not unreasonable to expect the florist to buy a handsome refrigerator and compressor with fine mechanism for \$3000. He might even prefer to have a custom-made case built for that amount and install it in the wall between the workroom and sales area, with the front glass and doors flush with the wall, thus not reducing the size of the sales area by the size of the refrigerator. The display case could well be five feet in depth, eight feet in length and seven to eight feet in height. It might have reach-in doors in the front with adjustable shelves and a walk-in door at the back or workroom side. The compressor operating the refrigerating mechanism should be in the basement.

Other fixtures for a sales area within the budget might be as follows:

Glass-topped desk for writing cards and display stand combined	\$100
Two chairs and metal glass-topped coffee table	150
Two wall cases of wood or metal, with glass shelves	200
Pedestals or nests of tables and plant stands	50
	<u>\$500</u>

Equipment and tools for workroom and office might be as follows:

Two work tables 4 x 8 feet with drawers, shelves and linoleum tops	\$110
Used desk, chair and cash register	150
Other office supplies and stationery	40
Wall shelves for boxes, ribbons and supplies	50
Stools, soil bin and rubbish chute	50
Knives, snips and refrigerator vases	50
Janitor equipment and miscellaneous	50
	<u>\$500</u>

It should be remembered that these are minimum requirements for the hypothetical shop described, which along with the refrigerator and delivery car would total a fixed capital investment of \$6300. Some of the items could be changed, omitted or substituted for others.

The landlord on a term lease of five or ten years generally will do necessary and desired lighting and plumbing installations. The florist might be asked to pay the additional cost for deep sinks or special plumbing connections, in which case they would have to be worked into the afore-mentioned budgets.

The working capital of \$2000 would be used for salable merchandise of all kinds. Included in that item would be wall brackets, some plant stands, vases and candleholders, which are decorative and do much to furnish the sales area of the flower shop, with the added color of foliage plants, blooming plants and cut flowers. Included also would be ribbons, wrapping paper, wedding props, accessories, boxes and all other supplies.

ADAPTABILITY

When making fixed investments in equipment and fixtures, the florist should always bear in mind that his ideas might change within a few years with a growing business. He may wish to enlarge or redecorate. If so, would the purchases made now be lost, or could they be moved and adapted to other surroundings or fit into a larger shop? In an expanding business, the display case might become a storage box in the working area when a larger refrigerator is purchased for the salesroom. Could the wall cases be enlarged or new units be built to match them?

These considerations cannot be stressed too much. Hasty decisions made in the selection of fixtures might prove to be unprofitable at the end of two years operation. Often the man most limited in capital makes the best and most practical selections, because he does not spend precious savings without careful thought.

XII * *Retail Policies*

Definite business policies to be used as a clear cut guide in the operation of the flower shop are generally so muddled and vague in the mind of a florist in the beginning that with all of the concern about materials, location, buying and designing, an explicit program of correlated business policies is not formulated. Consequently, his business goes on in a hit-and-miss fashion, without the intelligent management it deserves, losing prestige and profit.

The florist might well ask why definite retail policies are needed, what they are, and how they should be selected. The answers to those questions may vary considerably, depending upon the type of shop, location, personality of the proprietor or clientele.

NEED FOR RETAIL POLICIES

The need for explicit retail policies is not limited to large organizations, where they most often are noticed and appreciated by the public. The florist, large or small, must adopt and outline the rules and guides for the operation of his business, whether he has one or many employees. These rules will give every customer the same fair treatment.

Decisions should be made about the type of stock and accessories, opening and closing hours, prices, credit terms, will-call transactions, with or without deposits; deliveries, advertising, promotions, complaints, etc. The ability to select the policies best suited to his type of business may spell the success or failure of the florist's operation. His clear-cut statement and well considered formulation of policies will benefit him, his personnel and his clientele. These policies should have some flexibility so that they may be adapted to changes of a growing business and economic and social conditions.

THE SCOPE OF RETAIL POLICIES

The range of retail policies is so wide and varied that it would be difficult to mention all of them explicitly. Some are so general that they apply to all businesses. Some are so important that entire books have been written about them. Many of the retail policies of the florist can be formulated by answering the following questions:

What type of flower shop is contemplated? Will it offer a complete or specialized floral service? Are plants, cut flowers, corsages and various decorations to be sold?

What lines of accessories will be stocked? Will it include gift items associated and used only with flowers or will it include greeting cards, ceramics, figurines and other specialties, such as candy and perfume?

Will the service given be one of personal attention, or is a large departmentalized system contemplated? Will the shop cater to an exclusive clientele or appeal to the working or middle class wage earner?

Is the business to be built on a low-price policy or one which includes the most in service, packaging, delivery and style, with an appeal to fastidious tastes?

Where will cut flowers and plants be purchased, and will the emphasis be on price or quality?

What will be the price structure and mark-up from cost? Will discounts be given? Will prices fluctuate because of competition of other florists, who are merchandising with a low-price appeal?

Will the advertising program be restricted to certain media? Will it include direct mail, newspaper, radio, etc? Or will the advertising be done principally through various other promotions and window display? What part will the florist play in civic and community affairs?

What will be the practice on handling of finances and accounts payable?

What hours will the shop be open? Will that include Sunday? Will special Sunday orders, such as weddings and funeral work, be

accepted, or will the policy be one of no Sunday work or deliveries?

Will free delivery be made on orders amounting to less than \$3? Will special deliveries be made and at what extra cost? How much notice will be required on timed deliveries?

How will complaints be handled? Will all merchandise be unconditionally guaranteed, or with certain reservations, and if so what? What about C.O.D. purchases, returned merchandise and adjustments?

Is credit to be extended, and if so, what reference and requirements must be met by the purchaser? When will an account be considered past due and no further charges permitted?

What practice is to be followed in the hiring of employees, and what training will be given? What about wage increases and yearly bonuses? Will paid vacations be given to all employees and for how long? Will they be paid on an hourly basis? Will pay envelopes be distributed weekly, semi-monthly or monthly? Will purchase discounts be granted employees? If so, how much? What provisions will be made to maintain a high degree of efficiency and morale? What remuneration will employees receive for long overtime work on holidays?

Will merchandise be plainly priced on the sales floor? Will volume purchasers be given reduced prices? Will the customer who places standing orders receive special considerations?

What will be the policy in regard to handling telegraph orders? Will every cash customer receive a receipt? When will customers' statements be mailed?

Will the attitude toward various trade associations and florists' organizations be one of cooperation or nonchalance? Will the shop maintain friendly relations with all competing florists?

Will a cash reserve be built up for future remodeling, redecoration and improvements?

THE APPLICATION OF RETAIL POLICIES

The man who can sit down and make prompt decisions and detailed replies to all of these questions would indeed be a genius, because,

two to one, in his experience he would probably change his mind on some of the policies. Because of their importance and flexibility, these policies have been, or will be, considered in detail in separate chapters, because they apply to every phase of our business.

To assist the florist in answering some of these questions it would be helpful to study the following analysis made by the Florists Telegraph Delivery Association, which gives the average percentage on expenditures made in the operations of a cross section of flower shops in the U.S.A. in 1948:

<i>Cost of Merchandise:</i>		
Cut flowers and plants	41.3%	
Accessories and supplies	6.0	
	<hr/>	47.3%
<i>Overhead:</i>		
Wages and salaries	18.5%	
Delivery	3.4	
Advertising	3.2	
Insurance	.7	
Interest	.5	
Wrapping supplies	1.1	
Office supplies	.8	
Postage	.4	
Express and cartage out	.4	
Light and refrigeration	.8	
Taxes	.9	
Telephone and telegraph	1.2	
Rent	3.8	
Depreciation	.7	
Traveling and legal	.7	
Commissions to agents	.6	
Clearing House expense	.3	
Commissions on F.T.D. incoming	2.2	
Donations	.4	
Reserve charge for bad debts	.5	
Miscellaneous expense	2.4	
	<hr/>	43.5%
NET PROFIT		9.2%
		<hr/>
		100.0%

In setting up his own policies and budgeting his own expenses, comparison with this chart should be helpful to any florist.

This discussion can be valuable only if the florist adopts definite retail policies of his own and then adheres to them without discrimination or deviation. Consistency in the administration of retail policies, combined with common sense, is the great asset of every successful florist today.

XIII * *Personnel and Morale*

Every florist who has one or more employees also has the serious duties and opportunities of a personnel director. His management and handling of that one position as the boss will serve as a criterion upon which can be determined his ultimate success and happiness.

Ten minutes spent in any flower shop, talking with the employees and observing their work, will give any careful observer a fairly accurate picture of the directing head of the business. Without meeting the boss, that observer will have an insight into his business ability, personality, and ethical standards. Vice versa, time spent with the boss soon will give the observer a knowledge of the personnel of his shop and their morale.

If he is the right kind of employer, he will have an efficient, happy staff of workers, interested in the business and its success. It behooves every florist to spend more time being a better boss, rather than scouting around much of the time looking for new employees or griping about the ones who are "sticking it out" on their jobs.

BEING A BETTER BOSS

There never was a perfect boss. The job of being a better boss is never completed. There are many fine men operating small and large floral shops who are putting themselves into the shoes of their employees, trying every day to be better leaders, with more understanding, more confidence and more appreciation. They are the men who have found that application of the golden rule does not end in dealing with friends and customers, but goes right into the work-rooms.

Conscientious effort in that regard can solve most problems, but often the florist has difficulty in transposing himself into the places of his employees. It is easy to overlook one's own faults, particularly when riding in the driver's seat. Soon forgotten are the days in the

past when the man who is now boss was seated back in the car.

These words are not idle preaching and so much gibberish. They are the sound foundations of all business ethics. They work, and the methods followed by successful business men prove it.

More employees before accepting a position should check the references of their prospective florist employer. Some of the good characteristics they should look for are sound judgment, high ideals, pleasant personality, patience, sense of fair play, self-confidence in leadership, an open mind to new suggestions and ideas, humility, sympathetic understanding of problems of others, optimism, financial stability, tolerance and charity. The man or woman florist with these qualifications will be a respected leader, with a keen interest in the welfare and advancement of his or her employees.

The prospective employee should seek out the answers to the following questions pertaining to the shop and its management: Would that flower shop be a pleasant place in which to work? Are the present employees happy and interested in their work? What do they say about their boss? What are his neighbors' opinions concerning him and his home life? Is the shop one with which the employee would be proud to be associated? What are the chances for advancement? Is the business progressive? What are the regular hours? Is the salary adequate?

One of the reasons why a florist might fail to be a good director of his personnel lies in the fact that he began on a small scale without any employees. His wife might have taken care of the shop, while he himself did the design work and took care of the deliveries. There is no objection to that procedure, and only words of commendation can be given the hard worker who makes every sacrifice to start the wheels of his business rolling. After a few months, he may employ a deliveryman, who would also act as a porter and general helper in the shop. After more time and continued growth of the business he might employ a salesgirl, then a designer, then a bookkeeper, followed by more designers, etc. Until he has eight or more employees he doesn't realize that he is faced with a personnel problem, because he has not given much consideration to the matter. The

time to think about it, however, is when he hires the first employee. That is the time he should outline his program with respect to all personnel policies.

FAMILY STAFFED SHOPS

Many flower shops are entirely or largely family owned and staffed. Many of them are of the finest in the country, but some of them are shops where jealousies and rivalries develop to the detriment of the business and the wrecking of what might have been a happy, prosperous arrangement. In the latter minority group, the main difficulties have their beginnings in temperament and clash of personalities, because the individual members of the family do not curb their tempers and because they do not maintain the proper respect for each other in the pressure of a business rush. The big test comes often in times of business recession, when the profits are spread too thin to keep everyone happy and interested in the business. Then crack-ups and partitioning of the business might result.

The prosperous family staffed shops are those in which the members of the family take their duties and responsibilities in a fair, businesslike manner. Each one agrees to certain positions and duties and works for the common good. That is not an easy thing to do, but florists have been successful in that regard to a large extent, because this business attracts the type of personality that is broadminded, fair, charitable and thoughtful, with just the right amount of temperament and artistic ability to add a sufficient amount of spice. They are successful, too, because they do not expect more of each other than they would of an outside employee; they are not so greedy that they will not hire other employees when the business warrants it, rather than overworking each other, which causes frayed nerves and poor health. They are fair with each other as far as remuneration, distribution of the profits and working schedules are concerned.

Some men and women make perfect executives and work quite harmoniously and efficiently with any group except their own family members. Personality clashes, it seems, are too strong for them to curb to make smooth going in family arrangements.

SELECTING THE EMPLOYEE

The avenues from which employees may come to flower shops are many. Some applicants come on the invitation and solicitation of the shop, and others come voluntarily. Every shop should extend the consideration of a short interview to the person who drops in and asks for work. A file of those names and addresses and some information as to their experience and personality will come in handy on the day when additional help is being sought.

If the florist does not have in his file a prospect who might fit his requirements for an addition to his staff, he might place a want ad in a trade journal or in the daily papers at his city, or he might contact various wholesale florists and suppliers, who often know of experienced men and women who are desirous of making new connections in the industry.

Many florists can anticipate their need for additional personnel months in advance. In those cases, it is advisable to contact schools of floriculture and schools of design, asking that promising students with the necessary qualifications be referred to them for work after their graduation. Many of the fine designers today secured their first positions at the suggestion of the director of the school of design at which they took training. Secretaries of local trade associations are most cooperative in assisting both florists and workers in filling their common need.

When writing to the prospective employee, or in advertising in help wanted ads, the florist always should be as specific as possible in regard to the position available and the qualifications expected of applicants.

In no case is it ethical for a florist to solicit his new employees by contacting workers directly in other shops at his city securing their service by offering better positions. However, he may advise other florists and wholesalers that he has a position open and ask that if they hear of anyone desirous of making a change to contact him. That action is entirely ethical. If there is an employee of another shop who is unhappy in his present work, he may want an interview

for a contemplated change. If the new employer insists that the prospective employee give his present employer at least two weeks notice, and explain the reasons for making a change, he is being perfectly fair. He might even go one step farther and telephone or call on the present employer of that person and explain his action. That might also save hard feelings and misunderstanding and lead to continued friendly feelings on the part of other local florists.

If it were unethical procedure to employ anyone who was working in another shop, it would mean that every employee who was not satisfied with his position would have to leave his city and go to another for a position, or quit his position and be without employment for a time before accepting a new position. That would indeed be unfair to the worker and detrimental to the improvement of his circumstances.

THE APPRENTICE

Every flower shop can use an apprentice. The man or woman who is anxious to learn may be valuable as an employee while he is taking his training on the job. There seems to be an inclination to discourage this practice in many shops by their refusing to pay the apprentice a nominal wage, with regular increases as he becomes more efficient. There are many menial tasks which must be done in every shop, and the apprentice is only too glad to take on those duties while he is studying and practicing other jobs such as designing and selling.

An experienced designer often can do twice as much work when he has a helper to bring him the desired flowers, to wire and tape stems, to fill the needed containers with water, to pack corsages, etc. The inexperienced worker in a short time will become proficient at those tasks thus enabling the expert designer to do even more. The apprentice's salary may be only half that of the designer at that time, and this is a good investment for the florist, because his high salaried employee is not wasting his talent on work that less-experienced hands could do well.

The understudy in time will be able to fill a vacancy in the staff or

accept a position elsewhere as a designer, if the shop does not require his service. If the business volume of the shop is increasing, he would, of course, be kept on the payroll as a designer, and another apprentice added to the force. Larger shops find it profitable to have a few apprentices in training at all times. The best ones generally become permanent employees. It is not rare to see men and women who have taken their training in one shop remain there as valuable employees with increased responsibilities as the years go by.

THE INTERVIEW

The florist interviewing an applicant should put him at his ease first of all by general conversation. It often is a good idea to begin by telling the prospective employee some of the history of the shop, its ideals and methods of operation. He should be told about the position and the type of work anticipated generally, but it is advisable not to go into too much detail until near the end of the interview. Ask about the applicant's background, education, experience and the type of work he likes to do, rather than have him fill out a formal application blank for future reading. So much more can be learned in the personal interview, which may be followed by a formal written application, or within a few days, if a definite decision is not made during the interview. Through conversation a very good insight may be gained into the personality, education and character of the applicant. Vocabulary and voice are important, especially if the applicant is to have contact with the customer in the office, on the sales floor or on the telephone.

After discussing the position and having determined that the applicant might qualify, it is a good idea to obtain some information about his home life, family, church and club affiliations. If he or she seems to have a happy home life and attends church, it is a fairly safe guide to character. Character and personality are as important as ability and experience. A high degree of loyalty and interest on the part of a congenial employee can offset quickly many insufficiencies in his training. The latter are things which soon can be learned

in a shop. The sincerity and straightforward look of an applicant are probably more important to me in coming to a decision about his employment than any other thing.

Every florist has his own ideas about the type of person he would be proud to have in his employ, but his attitude in interviewing him and subsequent guiding of his work may soon deprive the employer of the services of a person who might have been ideal for the position. For that reason the employer should be definite at the time of interview about the wage scale, customary increases in salary and the hours of work. The employer should not fail to mention the number of occasions that overtime work is expected, particularly to the applicant who is not familiar with the florists' business. He should also point out the opportunities for advancement and permanence of the position.

When discussing salary, ask the employee if he thinks he can get along on the proposed wage without going into debt and let him know that his living within his income will be an asset to him and his future in the business. A person who can manage his own finances always makes a better employee than the one who is hounded by collectors. The man who can and does save some of his salary each week or month is a man of good judgment. He will have more self-confidence and stability. A happy employee is generally an efficient one.

Every florist has the need for extra or part-time employees who work on holidays and other particularly busy days. Many of them can be secured from the file of applicants. It is an advantage to have five or six extra helpers who are familiar with the work to assist whenever called. Part time workers are usually paid by the hour.

The subject of hours and wages will be treated more fully in the next chapter.

GIVING EMPLOYEES A CHANCE

It is not easy to begin a new job in a new shop and among new faces. It takes time for even the most expert and experienced person to adapt himself. Every shop has its own methods of handling orders

and styles to be followed in filling them. The new employee should be told to take it easy the first few days, observing but not trying to grasp all methods and details at once. Things might seem complicated to him at first, but let him know that the details will soon become second nature and habit. Encourage him to ask questions. If the proprietor himself cannot give the instruction and supervision at first, one of the other experienced employees can work with the new person. Give him confidence by letting him know that the impossible is not expected. Be specific in all instructions.

In smaller shops the employee in time will know about every operation from cashier to porter, and will probably do a bit of everything. In larger shops, he might be assigned to a certain type of work in the designing, delivery, office or sales department, but he should have a fairly complete picture of the all-over operation of the shop.

After sufficient training, the employee should be left to do his work without too much supervision. Nothing can spoil the attitude and interest of an employee sooner than too much careful watching of every detail of his work. A look at the finished product and regular inspections with corrections when necessary, make for good results and better workmanship.

DELEGATING AUTHORITY

As the staff of employees grows, authority should be given to key employees or department heads, making certain branches of the work their definite responsibility. One might have charge of buying and another, designing. Another might have supervision of outgoing deliveries and incoming stock, and in larger shops one person would have charge of all office activities. One of the designers particularly apt at party work could be given charge of all outside decorations. When an employee has definite duties and responsibilities, he will take more pride in his work. A porter, for instance, will do better work and take more interest in his job when given complete charge of keeping the shop in order than he will if he is told when to sweep the floor, when to dust, when to lower the awnings and when to clean the refrigerators, etc.

The good businessman or executive must delegate authority and have confidence in the men he selects to do certain work. It should always be remembered that responsibilities delegated to others and handled well should receive commensurate compensation. The demands made should be reasonable and in line with the ability of the worker.

CONDUCT OF EMPLOYEES

The florist who does his best to provide ideal working conditions to encourage better morale among his employees has a right to expect in return good conduct on their part. Some of the rules employees should observe are self-evident, but they are emphasized in the following list of do-nots:

Do not be a clock watcher.

Do not fudge on an order nor cut a customer short because it is time to go home.

Do not make it a habit to be tardy in reporting for work.

Do not handle carelessly an order which was planned by another designer.

Do not resent taking orders from a department head. Instead, remember that he is the voice of the boss.

Do not waste flowers nor be careless in handling them.

Do not ever feel that you are above doing any kind of work that has to be done, regardless of whose regular duty it might be.

Do not gripe and complain to your fellow workers. Instead go to your supervisor for solution of the problem. If he cannot correct the situation, he will go to the boss with you for counsel.

Do not permit your work to be interrupted too often by personal telephone calls from family and friends.

Do not hang back in the harness because you may be caught up with your work. Instead, do it and go to work on other jobs with other employees.

Do not be careless in your personal appearance or speech.

Do not speak without thinking first unless you are going to say something good.

Do not lag just because the boss is out of his office.

Do not ever forget that anything which will help the shop will help you in the end.

MORALE

Key men or department heads in the flower shop staff should have an intimate knowledge of the aims of the employer in relation to the business, including other employees and their work. They should have a voice in the program and be consulted frequently in regard to changes in policy and the efficiency of work in their various departments. At all times they, as well as all other employees, should feel free to discuss any problem with their employer. If the florist is human and understanding in helping employees solve their problems about work or personal affairs, he will reap a reward in added diligence and loyalty of his staff.

Real team work and a fine esprit de corps do not just happen. They take guidance, consultation and good judgment in selecting the staff. Friendly, informal group meetings, in which an open forum discussion is held about all business problems and policies, are helpful. The suggestion box, with rewards offered for the best ideas in design or improving service, is advantageous and adds interest to the work. At group meetings the employer might go over all the suggestions and then determine the winners of awards, or he might take a vote of the employees to decide.

Employees working together form close friendships among fellow employees, and this relationship is carried into their social life, where companionship and mutual understanding are strengthened. This personal feeling of friendship may prove to be a definite asset to their work in that a good spirit of cooperation and helpfulness exists, or it might prove to be detrimental if some of the group were not included in that association. Cliques and group jealousies may develop unless the personalities and characters of the employees selected by the florist are of the highest type.

The employer and his family should not be included in any of these social groups of his employees to the exclusion of other em-

ployees. As a general rule, personal and social relationships with any of the employees is not a good practice for an employer. Personal feelings, lack of respect and jealousy may creep into the feelings of the personnel, because the florist unthinkingly failed to consider it until it was too late. It would be even more embarrassing to break social relations with employees after they had begun.

At the end of interviews with new employees, I explain our policy in regard to social contacts by telling them that it is not that I would not personally enjoy their company, but that I had found it to be a better business policy to deprive myself of those contacts. This policy does not preclude my attendance at affairs which include all employees, such as Christmas parties, picnics and the like, which are good for morale.

Consistency on the part of the florist will go far in helping the morale of his staff. Making decisions about policy on various operations and sticking to them are valuable. In other words, the boss should not run hot one time and cold another on the same issue. That kind of attitude throws his entire staff off balance, and the employees never know where they stand in making decisions. Give them added confidence by backing them in decisions and plans they make with customers and suppliers.

Occasional words of commendation for outstandingly fine work will do more than harsh criticism of work not up to standard. Everyone makes mistakes and has accidents. When one befalls the employee, acknowledge the fact that you too make mistakes. A sincerely spoken complimentary remark or a written note to that effect generally will give the worker a lift and added inspiration for greater endeavor. I do not mean to say that corrections and constructive criticism are unnecessary. However, criticism of work and admonitions concerning behavior are always most effective when done in a kindly way.

When something goes wrong with a customer's order, because of an error on the part of an employee, do not belittle your employee to that customer, but be impersonal about it, or place the blame on yourself, where it ultimately belongs. Employees appreciate those

courtesies. When a customer phones you with praise for a certain fine piece of work, tell him that you will thank the designer, too, because he did the actual work. Those things add zest to any job. They make the boss feel better too.

Work should be enjoyable to the entire group. Pleasant conversation, smiles and laughter are music to the ears of an employer, because they mean that employees are working with less strain and fatigue.

There are several other things which have proved to be good morale builders, such as regular time off, staggered lunch hours, tables and chairs for those who bring lunches, rest periods, dinners or refreshments furnished when working overtime, purchase discounts to all employees, hospitalization and workmen's compensation insurance, a first aid kit for minor cuts and injuries and a radio in the workroom.

A florist I know well once told me of an incident which bears repeating. He had been invited to speak at a florists' meeting in a distant city. At a group meeting of his employees he mentioned it and asked his employees for suggestions of topics about which he might speak. One of them said, "Tell those other florists how to be the kind of a boss you are." Other employees chimed in, in agreement. To this day, that florist says that was one of the greatest compliments he ever received and that it is still helping him to be a better executive.

XIV * *Hours and Wages*

STORE HOURS

It took a war to wake up florists to the fact that their hours of operation could be reduced to a standard comparable to that of other merchants. Previous to that it was thought by many that the florist would lose considerable business if his shop was not open twelve hours a day or more. However, customers found that they could conform their orders to the more restricted hours. Florists since then have found that the shorter hours are more desirable in every way. The business volume continues to increase, and labor and management both are pleased with the result.

Opening and closing hours for the flower shop should be regular and definite. Practices vary in different localities. In some it might be from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., in others 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., more or less. Each shop should determine its own policy. The location of the shop and custom in the territory would influence those hours. If a florist thinks it would be to his advantage to be open twenty-four hours daily, that is his privilege, but his decision should not influence the actions of other florists in his community. If all of the florists would follow suit, the action would be costly and detrimental to all.

The hours a shop is open for sales and telephone orders may not coincide with the hours of operation in the designing department, as often it is necessary to have some work completed for early delivery. Also those workers who begin work early should quit earlier in the afternoon than do the members of the delivery, office and sales departments.

COOPERATION WITH OTHER FLORISTS

There are a few indications in some sections of the country that flower sales may drop somewhat below the high level of the past few

years. This condition could be caused by a number of factors, some within the control of the florists and others of a general economic nature. The worst possible action of retaliation to that trend on the part of the florist would be his resorting to the old prewar practices of extremely long hours. Most of the arguments against that practice, such as longer working hours for employees, higher utility bills, lowered morale, etc., are obvious. In spite of everything against the practice of long hours, there are some shop owners who, in the hope of picking up additional sales, will resort to them as soon as there is a drop in sales volume.

The ideal situation exists at cities where florists in their own organizations agree on the hour policy and all act accordingly. In most cases, however, there are a few rugged individualists who insist on playing the lone wolf, without cooperating in any trade organization or heeding its recommendations. They refuse to recognize the fact that other florists are not their real competitors. They should be cooperating with their fellow florists through organization to publicize flowers in every way, as opposed to their real competitors offering other merchandise in their bid for the gift dollars.

EMPLOYEES' WORKING HOURS

Explicit working schedules should be set up for the employees of every shop. They should be able to plan definitely on their time off. At some cities this is governed by labor union regulations. Federal and state minimum wage and hour laws also should be observed. In no case should the working schedule exceed five and one half days per week.

Saturday in the flower shop generally is a busy day, and the full staff is needed, in which case half days of free time for each employee could be spaced on various week days to suit the pleasure of the employee and the working schedule of the shop.

Every shop experiences volume peaks at holidays, such as Easter, Christmas, Mothers' Day, in addition to the days on which large decorations, formal store openings or large funeral orders are booked. On those days many extra hours of work are required on the

part of the entire staff. That time should be offset with additional time off whenever possible or with greater pay. When extra work is required on exceptionally busy days, part-time help may be called in. In those cases it is also good psychology to let capable employees and department heads make the decision about the working time required and whether or not extra part-time help should be called. Passing on the responsibility for making those decisions leads to better planning of the work on their part. The result is much better than that following a dictum from the manager that everyone report for work at a certain early hour.

Every worker should have a full hour for lunch and rest. Each employee with a year's service should be given an adequate vacation each year with pay. If the employee has been working for six months, it is only fair to give him a proportionate paid vacation. Many shops find it a good policy to give each employee a few days additional vacation in January, following the busy December rush. Whenever possible, employees according to seniority should have their choice of dates for vacations.

SUNDAY CLOSING

The question of Sunday closing of flower shops has been argued for years at various meetings and conventions. The shops that close on Sundays are as much in favor of the practice as those that open on Sundays are opposed to it. The problem is not so simple as it appears on the surface.

Sunday closings are more common in larger cities where there are no Sunday funerals because of rulings on the part of cemetery and church organizations. There is also the obstacle of orders requesting flower deliveries on Sunday for funerals to be held early Monday morning. The florist who closes on Sunday and has orders for such services sends them on Saturday, with preservatives, water picks or Sno-pak to keep the flowers from wilting before the service.

Sunday weddings are another problem. The shop which is closed

on Sunday generally does not book any wedding orders for Sunday delivery. Other shops are closed on Sunday, but they will deliver wedding and funeral orders which are placed in advance.

The florist at the smaller city has a more difficult problem because of his more intimate association with the entire population, who expect service at any time. Sunday weddings and funerals are common at the small towns, and those occasions really tax the facilities of the florists.

The shop which adheres to a Sunday closing policy should not make exceptions for certain customers. That procedure leads to severe repercussions. An order that is delivered for one customer on Sunday is no more important in the eyes of another customer than is his order. If a shop owner starts making exceptions, it would be a better policy for him to remain open on all Sundays.

If a shop is open on Sunday, arrangements should be made for employees to have another day off during the week. Going to church on Sunday means much to many persons, and it is a good practice which should not be denied to anyone. To other people the rest and relaxation on that day means just as much to their happiness and well-being.

The general public and all flower shop customers usually will respect the shop that adheres to the Sunday closing policy. People do not expect the gift merchant or department store to deliver merchandise on Sunday just because it is someone's birthday, anniversary or wedding.

I favor closing on Sunday without exception. I am glad to refer customers who are insistent on having Sunday deliveries to those shops which are open on Sunday. I have had the experience of working seven days a week, including evenings, in my own shop, but would not return to that practice or recommend it to anyone else. The few orders lost by Sunday closing could never persuade me to ask my employees to work on that day. The only exceptions we make are Easter and Mothers' Day, in addition to Christmas and St. Valentine's day when they fall on Sunday. Then we close at noon.

HOLIDAY CLOSING

Realizing the value of good morale, some florists have gone to the extent of closing on every holiday and sometimes at noon on the day before. On the other hand, other employers are so grossly interested in their businesses that they overlook the importance of holidays in the lives of their employees and families.

Shops which close Sundays should experience no difficulty at all in closing on Labor Day and the Fourth of July. On Easter and Mothers' Day they may adhere to the rule and make all deliveries on the days previous, or they make an exception to their regular policy and remain open at least part of the day to facilitate handling the great number of orders booked, in addition to late orders which might be received on those mornings.

On other holidays, such as Christmas, St. Valentine's day, Thanksgiving and New Year's day, varied policies might be adopted. Any policy should be definite, so that employees and customers would know of the plan in advance. The shop might be closed all day, just in the afternoon, or not at all.

Our own policy in regard to holidays, except for Labor Day and Fourth of July, when we close all day, is a compromise. We close at noon on all other holidays. On those half holidays only half of the regular staff reports for work, giving the other employees a full holiday. The employees decide among themselves in advance which ones in each department will be off all day on those holidays, alternating the work and suiting their convenience as to which days they would prefer entirely free of work.

WAGES AND SALARIES

The biggest item of expense in the flower shop is the amount spent for wages and salaries. In the average shop this amounts to twenty per cent of the gross sales and includes all wages paid, including the owner's salary. In shops operating on a low price policy, the percentage might be lower. In shops operating on a service policy, where most flowers are delivered already arranged and beautifully

packaged, the percentage might run much higher because of the added work on each order.

The old saw, "You get what you pay for", applies well in the case of wages and salaries. Many things make a position desirable, and the same things make the employee a desirable one. A fair employer will pay well the employee who serves him efficiently. Although business relations have their important human side, it is a cold-blooded affair in which the employee must make money for the florist to remain on the payroll. The florist who tries to take advantage of a condition, or underpay an employee, is cheating himself, as well as the employee.

Paying higher wages than the average florist may prove to be good business, because the recipients of that money will work more diligently than would a staff twice as large receiving half the individual wages.

Most shops pay on a weekly or semi-monthly basis. Some pay key-men or department heads monthly or weekly salaries and the rest of the employees on an hourly basis. In meetings of our employees this has been discussed, and by unanimous vote, all employees preferred the weekly wage over the hourly, regardless of the extra hours of work. Some florists pay, in addition to regular wages, a small percentage on sales by the individual. This practice is not good, because it leads to rivalry among salespeople, soliciting of orders and high pressure sales tactics.

When the flower shop is incorporated, the management can issue shares of stock to key employees as part salary or bonus. This gives them a real interest in the business, and they share in the profits in proportion to the amount of stock they own. Yearly bonuses paid at the close of each business year, usually after or just before Christmas, are common. Most businesses find them worthwhile incentives to employees. Sometimes the amount of the bonus is based upon the profits of the business and is paid proportionately, depending on regular wages and seniority. It is better practice, however, to pay key employees annual bonuses based on total sales rather than profits. The amount of profit a business shows might be the

subject of argument and cause friction between employer and employee. Employees then might question the florist concerning his expenditures, which would reduce the amount of their share in the profits at the end of the year. Farsighted florists for that reason pay key employees a small percentage of the gross sales or a larger percentage on the increase in sales as compared to the previous year. The amount of the annual bonuses would, of course, be included within the twenty per cent wage for the average shop.

Our own policy is that of paying employees twenty per cent of the gross sales, exclusive of the owners' income from the business. At the end of the year, the amount remaining in that twenty per cent of gross sales fund, not already paid to employees as wages and salaries, is divided and paid in bonuses, based on seniority and wage scale. We have found that the entire staff is interested not only in total sales, but also in making money for the shop. That is basic. If the shop is not making a profit it cannot continue to operate.

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XV * *Deliveries*

Delivery of flowers is one of the essential services required of practically all florists, and they have developed it to a high degree of efficiency. It is also one service that often is abused by the unusual demands made upon it by florists themselves. Many florists have gone to extremes in catering to the whims of customers who expect delivery of flowers to be made on extremely short notice.

Compared to the deliveries of merchandise by other stores, those by the florist in his every day routine would be considered special. That is necessarily true because of the time element and perishable nature of practically all flower orders. Although most florists offer excellent delivery service as far as time is concerned, there are many aspects connected with it which are overlooked by them but which are important to customers. These are things which require constant attention in order to increase business through good will created by a more highly perfected delivery service. If deliveries are not handled properly, the effect of the salesperson's ability and the designer's art may be lost.

THE DELIVERY MAN

The man who delivers the flowers makes more contacts with customers and leaves more impressions in the minds of the public daily than any other employee. He is on the streets constantly, in public buildings and in homes, meeting strangers and customers. The kind of impression he leaves will have a direct bearing on the business.

The value of his personality, appearance and intelligence is obvious. His services, if viewed in the proper light, are as important as those of any other employee associated with the flower shop. Yet he is generally the lowest paid employee, and is hired on the basis of low pay rather than on other valuable qualifications.

Apprentices often begin their work in flower shops by delivering part of the time. As they progress in their knowledge of the work, or as the business increases, a man may be selected to do delivering exclusively, or with some janitor duties in addition. When that man is selected, the florist should be on the lookout for the following qualifications: Pleasant personality, good speaking voice and vocabulary, neat appearance, a solicitous manner, knowledge of streets and locations, driving experience, sober habits, etc.

When employed, he should be told of his duties and the importance of his position in meeting people when he is delivering flowers. He also should be taught the names of various flowers and their care, so that he will be able to answer customers' questions. He should be able to recognize misplaced flowers in arrangements he handles so that he can correct the flower which has slipped out of place before delivery is completed. He should know how to handle flowers, presenting them with a flourish, never in a careless manner, regardless of whether he is delivering to a home, hospital or funeral chapel. His good manners and his courtesies never will be wasted effort. He will offer to handle and unwrap large packages upon delivery, fill containers with water and make suggestions as to the flowers' care.

The delivery man should be furnished a well fitting uniform, similar to the customary chauffeurs' garb, or a tailored uniform in good taste. The jacket and cap should be inscribed with the shop name to make him immediately recognizable by the persons receiving flowers. Cleaning and pressing service on all uniforms should be paid by the shop, unless other special arrangements are made. It should be stressed that a spotless, pressed uniform on the driver is as important as the appearance of the package he delivers.

His ability as a good driver should be rewarded with cash prizes or increases in salary. Keeping him interested in his work and proud of his position is of far less expense and trouble to the florist than the periodic turnover in deliverymen. Many fine deliverymen leave their jobs because their work is not appreciated and because they are treated as mere flunkies by other employees. The hard work in all

kinds of weather, the caution required on busy streets and the importance of his work should be respected by all other employees, regardless of the age or race of the delivery man.

THE DELIVERY CAR

The styles and makes of florists' delivery cars are numerous, but most popular with all shops is the half-ton panel truck. The reasons for and against different types of delivery cars are about as varied as are the makes of automobiles.

The small shop in its beginning might be served quite adequately with a passenger car for delivery purposes. Other shops might find the panel truck, with the auxiliary use of a passenger car, adequate. Large shops might require a fleet of delivery trucks. Some florists are well pleased with leased trucks, which are available in most larger cities. The rental companies take care of all repairs, insurance, gas and oil and replacement of the truck with a new one when necessary.

Some city shops use station wagons and passenger cars exclusively, because they can be driven on the boulevards, which makes for faster delivery and smoother rides for the flowers and arrangements. When those shops do need a large truck for heavy and bulky decorations, they augment their facilities for those days by renting a truck.

The choice of delivery equipment is one of personal preference, depending on the needs of the particular shop. Regardless of the kind, the car should be mechanically efficient and a credit to the shop it represents as far as appearance is concerned. Modern, well kept cars, bearing the name of the shop or trade-mark lettered in appropriate colors in good taste, are constantly moving signboards on the streets in the city.

EXTRA DELIVERY EQUIPMENT

The florists' delivery truck should have some extra equipment to facilitate its specialized service. Racks to hold vases, plants and baskets to prevent their tipping are a necessity. These can be built by the florist in sections from lightweight lumber, so that they can be re-

moved from the car easily when the space is needed for other packages. Shelf-like racks or hooks, on which to hang or place funeral pieces, are a great space saver in the truck. Often these shelves are built on hinges attached to the walls of the truck body. When in use, these shelves almost meet in the center of the truck, giving the car a triple floor area for hauling many funeral pieces at one time. Florists have devised several ingenious gadgets to fit their own delivery cars for utilizing their entire capacity in the delivery of flowers.

The bodies of some trucks are insulated against extreme heat and cold, a precaution to insure the perfect condition of flowers at the time of delivery. The heated and insulated truck will save considerable time and additional wrapping materials in extremely cold weather.

A spotlight or a good flashlight is a great convenience and time-saver for the delivery man on late trips, when it is too dark to see house numbers from the street. A clock in the instrument panel or a watch for the driver on timed deliveries is essential.

In the near future, the two-way radio in all kinds of delivery cars may be considered standard equipment. It will enable the florist to contact the driver at any time to give him changes of addresses and instructions for other stops to be made on the same route. The delivery department supervisor will know at all times the whereabouts of the driver and will be able to tell almost to the minute when he will return for other deliveries or whether he has had trouble of any kind.

A street guide and directory in the car will help the driver locate correct addresses when an incorrect number has been furnished by the customer or an error has been made in the office or salesroom. He always should have available an assortment of wire, modeling clay and tape, so that he can do minor repairing and straightening without returning an entire arrangement to the shop. If the damage is serious or the flowers broken beyond repair, the driver should know in all cases that the piece should be returned to the shop, so that the damaged flowers may be replaced. He should not be criticized too

severely when he has an accident of this kind. Often it is not his fault. He might have had a car that was too heavily loaded or crowded, or he might have had to stop suddenly to avoid a traffic accident. A ride by the florist in his own delivery car with a load of flowers will soon convince him that breakage and disarranged bouquets are not always the fault of his deliveryman.

DELIVERY RECEIPTS

A signed receipt for every delivery made by the florist is essential. It is a protection for the florist and proof for his customer that the final step completing the order was handled properly. Every florist experiences daily phone calls from customers asking if delivery of orders placed a few days or weeks previous have been made. Lack of acknowledgment by the recipient causes the sender to question the delivery. When the florist can turn to his file and furnish the name of the person who signed for the flowers, his customer is satisfied.

The delivery receipt may be in the form of a card, which is dated, with a space for the name of the item, the name and address of the consignee and the recipient's signature. Special cards may be printed for this purpose, or the florist may use a blank index card, rubber-stamping upon it the imprint of his shop name.

Instead of using a card receipt for each package, a book with lines and spaces for information and signature might be preferred. This book may be loose-leaf or in bound sections held on a clip board or spring aluminum binder to give a solid backing for writing. There are arguments in favor of both systems.

Our preference is the card receipt system, because it is more flexible. A card can be filled out at the same time the tag envelope is addressed and is ready for use as soon as the order is filled. The time promised for delivery should be marked on this card. The cards should be placed in order by the person routing the deliveries, so the driver can go to the addresses in rotation, according to the order of the delivery cards. At the end of the day these cards should be placed in alphabetical order according to the names of the recipients,

and each day's delivery cards should be kept in a file. After three months, they may be destroyed. Some florists mail the receipts to their customers.

A count of delivery receipts gives the florist an accurate way to compute the cost per delivery. Delivery expense, not counting wages, in the average shop amounts to three per cent of gross sales. In figuring the delivery cost of each package, all car expenses including depreciation and the salary of the driver, divided by the number of deliveries would furnish the cost of delivery per package. City florists have reported their delivery cost per package to be between 35 and 75 cents.

If the consignee is not at home when the delivery is made, the driver always should know what to do. Usually he should leave a note on the door of the recipient's home advising him that delivery of flowers had been attempted and that they were either left at a neighbor's home or returned to the shop. Notices to hook on door handles imprinted with the florist's name with spaces to give the necessary information may be purchased at stationers catering to florists' needs.

SPECIAL DELIVERIES

Although a great many florists' orders are timed deliveries, they usually are not considered special deliveries unless the delivery must be made within a short time after the order has been placed or unless a customer requests delivery at a certain time. Every shop decides its own policy in regard to this.

A great number of city florists set up regular schedules for deliveries to various sections of the city or suburbs and certain hospitals. They acquaint their customers with the hours of those deliveries on regular routes. Any delivery outside of that area or at a different time would be considered special, and generally an extra charge is made if the order is accepted. A delivery to be made within an hour or two after receipt of the order in the average shop would be considered a special delivery, and a reasonable fee should be charged, depending on the distance.

When an order is placed in advance for a luncheon, delivery should be made sometime in the morning with the other orders. If for a dinner, or an evening affair, the order should be delivered on regular routes with other afternoon orders. Neither of these should be classed as special deliveries by the florist.

A closing hour for order taking for delivery the same day should be established. It usually is early or mid-afternoon. Any delivery of an order placed after that time would be classed as special. One exception made by most shops is that of the late funeral order. Every effort is made to rush delivery of these last minute orders, usually without extra charge.

It is a common practice for shops to have a definite policy in regard to the minimum purchase, usually \$2 to \$4, upon which delivery will be furnished without extra charge.

SPECIAL HANDLING

Hospitals and funeral homes in different sections of the country have set up rules regarding the delivery of flowers. Their preferences, whether indicated by set regulation or not or whether they apply to time, manner, place or kind of delivery, should be respected by the florist and his deliveryman. Some funeral homes close their receiving room to flowers at certain hours, because they cannot receive, catalogue and place the flowers for a funeral service on last-minute deliveries. Some hospitals have a regular flower room to which the florist delivers, while others require the packages to be taken to the floor or room occupied by the patient.

Some churches and other institutions also have rules and procedures which should be followed by the florist in delivering flowers.

Weddings, in their decoration and service, require considerable time on the part of deliverymen, and dismantling the decorations after the ceremony often requires their working long after closing hours. This extra service should be accounted for and included in the price of every decoration or order requiring special handling.

The florist has his biggest problem at holiday times when a number of extra delivery cars and men are needed to handle the orders.

He might have taxicabs deliver corsages and boxes of cut flowers, but more often he has his own group of men with cars, often college students at home for the Easter or Christmas vacation, who help on every holiday. Having the same men work on various holidays obviously is advantageous. They may be paid on an hourly basis, by the mile or a certain amount for each package delivered.

C.O.D. orders are handled by the florist in the regular manner without extra charge, and collection is made by the driver, who leaves a receipt with the customer. The order may have been one on which a down payment was required before it was made up or delivered.

Every florist has his own policy in regard to picking up customers' containers to be planted or arranged or his own containers after they have been used by his customer. In handling an expensive or breakable container belonging to a customer, the florist always should warn him that he cannot be responsible for breakage. In most of those cases, the customer will assume the risk gladly, or else may bring in and pick up the container after it has been arranged. There is no insurance policy a florist can buy to protect himself against the breakage of his customers' vases and bowls in his custody, unless those specific items are listed in his policy.

Many shops make regular scheduled deliveries to nearby cities where there may be no other floral service. Others offer to ship flowers by air express to any part of the country and by rail express within a radius of several hundred miles. Although this is not general, it is a policy which is not recommended in view of efficient florists' telegraphic services available to all good florists.

It should go without saying that anyone interested in building a business or staying in business should not be careless in making promises about deliveries or any other matter pertaining to his service or merchandise. If an order is promised for delivery at a certain time, it should be delivered at that time. Every florist knows that failure to fill orders as promised causes the cancellation of orders and the loss of customers. Success in any business is in direct ratio to its integrity. The integrity of a florist's shop is only as good as that of its management and personnel in living up to their promises.

XVI * *Supplies and Inventory*

The working capital of the florist is not large compared to that of other businessmen. His stock of cut flowers and plants, which accounts for most of the sales, is turned over practically every day and replenished with new merchandise. This is necessarily true because of the perishable nature of most flowers and plants. A large part of any florist's working capital is invested in supplies, decorative materials and accessories, which he uses every day in the preparation and arrangement of flowers.

In the previous discussion of budgets and finances, an allowance of \$2,000 was made for working capital as a minimum for the florist starting a new business. Less than \$200 of that would be used on plants and cut flowers, and the balance of \$1,800 would be invested in containers, supplies and accessories. This chapter is limited to a description of these to the exclusion of cut flowers, plants, and office and stationery supplies, which will be discussed later.

INVENTORY

The stock of supplies in a flower shop should be complete and adequate for efficient work at all times. The number of items which might be utilized in the workroom and for various types of design work is almost limitless. A glance through the catalogs of leading florists' supply firms by anyone not familiar with the business would be revealing. The florist who is starting a new business either could list the materials he would need with the aid of one of these catalogs, or he could visit wholesale florists' supply houses. He should be able to buy an ample opening stock for \$1,800 or less.

The kind and quantity of supplies and accessories purchased will depend on the type of shop the florist operates. If he has a low-

price policy, he generally would not carry high grades of satin and taffeta ribbons, ceramics or fine glassware.

The wholesale supply firm will recommend the quantities of various supplies for the new shop. Any experienced florist would also be glad to recheck that list and make recommendations as to the quantities of various supplies contemplated. Caution should be exercised to avoid overstocking of seldom-used materials to prevent tying up valuable working capital. Money invested in little-used or slow-moving merchandise may prove disastrous.

The florist who operates efficiently and follows good business procedure takes an accurate inventory of all of his salable merchandise and supplies at least semi-annually. This enables him to figure his profit accurately for a given period and is necessary in the proper preparation of income tax returns. It also serves as a guide in determining slow-moving items. Well arranged and labeled merchandise and materials in the stockrooms make the task a simple one and saves time in selecting materials for every day work. The inventory should be made on a cost or current price basis whichever is lower.

Too few florists really know how much money they have invested in inventory. If they did know how much really idle working capital they had, it would tend to make them more careful buyers and better money-makers. Dead inventory and slow-moving merchandise should be disposed of as rapidly as possible in any business. In other businesses this generally is done through special sales. The florist need not do that because so many of his orders are combination sales of bowls, vases, plants and flowers. Many of his orders are open, and his slow-moving stock often can be utilized to his advantage, as well as to that of his customers, by using containers at a price discount on hospital and gift orders. The moving out of these items gives the florist a chance to use that working capital on new merchandise and accessories. A fast turnover of this stock and its replacement with new and different merchandise will always interest a customer and lead to increased sales, instead of giving the store a dead atmosphere, with the same stock on the shelves from month to month.

Florists' supplies might be classified as follows: Working materials, trimming supplies, packing supplies, floral containers, decoration accessories and supplementary and holiday supplies.

WORKING MATERIALS

Wire is one of the most used supplies in the workroom of the flower shop. The designer uses it to reinforce stems and fasten together the stems in designs of every kind. Florists' wire, either green-enameled or natural finish, annealed for pliability, comes in 12 or 18-inch lengths, in weight graduations from No. 32, the finest, to No. 18, the heaviest. The lighter weight wire is also available on spools or sticks to use for binding.

Florists' thread, in various weights and green in color, is preferred by some designers to use in the tying and binding of flowers in sprays and corsages.

Floratape (waxed elastic paper), *stemwrap* (adhesive ribbon) and *Parafilm* (waxed elastic composition) are used primarily to wrap and finish stems and cover wire in corsages and bouquets. They are available in various colors and are from one-half to one inch wide.

Wire designs, such as wreaths, hearts and casket plaques, are used as foundations for making flower designs, mainly for funerals.

Sphagnum moss in bales is shredded and moistened for packing and molding the wire designs. Then the design or wreath generally is wrapped with *green wax paper* or *wreath wrap*. Some designs already packed with moss may be purchased.

Easels of heavy wire or wood construction are used as standards for many of the designs, particularly for funeral and cemetery work.

Picks of wood, wired or unwired, in various sizes, are used as stems for flowers to facilitate impaling them in the mossed designs. *Steelpix* are used for the same purpose, but must be applied to the flower stem by a special machine made for that purpose.

Bamboo stakes are used to reinforce the backs of tied sprays of flowers and also are useful in reinforcing long, pliable stems of flowers or plants.

Chicken wire netting, in 1 or 2-inch mesh, when crushed and used in bowls or vases, is a popular holder for flower stems.

Frogs of metal, in the dome or pin type, are also used as flower holders, particularly in low, flat bowls.

Modeling clay and plumber's lead are needed to fasten holders to the bottom of bowls and trays.

TRIMMING SUPPLIES

Philly fern pins, shaped somewhat like hair pins, are convenient for fastening ferns and flowers to mossed designs.

Flower dye, sold under a number of trade names, is available for tinting flowers to achieve certain color effects and may be purchased in tablet, powder or liquid form.

Flower wax is applied by submersion or the spraying of the flowers to seal in the moisture of the petals and retard wilting.

Floralife and *Bloomlife* are trade names for cut flower foods, which dissolved in the water according to directions, will prolong the life and beauty of the flowers.

Sno-Pak and *Styrofoam* as foundations for floral arrangements have versatile uses in the hands of the designer.

Floral cement is a handy rapid-drying glue made specifically for the gluing of flowers to materials obviating the use of wire or thread and giving a neater finish to that type of work.

Crepe paper, *foil*, *Pliofilm* and *cellophane*, twenty to twenty-four inches wide, in various colors, designs and combinations, may be purchased on 50-foot rolls and are used primarily in decorating plants and gifts.

Ribbon is one of the most important items on the florists' supply list in that it is used generously and accounts for a large percentage of their investment in supplies. Good ribbon of chiffon, satin and taffeta in a range of colors and widths from one-fourth to five or more inches might account for an investment of more than \$500 for an opening stock. Metalines and sleazy ribbons of inferior grade are used commonly in shops operating on a low-price policy.

Metallic ribbons, net, French maline, cords, braids, feathers, sequins, Fringette, Curly-que find many uses in flower shops especially for corsage and bridal work.

Bouquet holders, handles, corsage pins, bands for wristlets and necklaces are other items stocked by all florists.

PACKING SUPPLIES

Boxes account for a sizable investment of the florists' working capital. Flower boxes range in size from the smallest for boutonnieres to the large ones for funeral designs. The quality and colors obtainable are numerous. Shipping cartons of all sizes for flowers taken on long trips or shipped by rail, plane or motor also are stocked by most shops. These materials will be considered more fully later.

Other items generally used for wrapping and packing flowers are various weights of tissue and wrapping paper, waxed tissue, cellophane, cellophane corsage bags, tags, shredded paper, Scotch tape, gummed tape, twine, Ty-ad tape, etc.

Baskets of wicker or metal in many sizes and shapes are staple merchandise in most flower shops and are used most often for funerals, store openings and decorations.

Bowls and vases of every kind are accepted merchandise today in flower shops. Florists are selling more arrangements of flowers and plants in containers than ever before. Arrangements in specific receptacles are selected often by customers to send as gifts for various occasions.

Brass, copper and pewter containers are popular sellers when arranged with flowers or plants. Many of these items made of other materials are also decorative accessories for any home and have considerably increased the business of many florists.

Hospital vases are used by the hundreds in flower shops. Although they are made of inexpensive glass, earthenware or papier-mâché in different shapes and sizes they can be extremely effective when arranged. The quantity used is great because all reputable florists send arrangements instead of loose flowers, to hospitals. Generally

speaking, the cost of a hospital container to the florist is no more than a good cut flower box would be.

Novelties, such as small containers for the new baby and figurine containers for flowers and plants, are merchandised by most florists.

Cemetery vases, designed specifically for memorial flowers on the grave, are used extensively, particularly on religious holidays and Memorial Day.

DECORATING ACCESSORIES

Candles are sold by florists with table, party and wedding decorations.

Bowls, candelabra and figurines are often rented or loaned by the florist with various floral decorations.

Some shops also stock a great variety of props for special decorations of all kinds for both indoor and outdoor parties and celebrations. Pedestals, lamps, urns, screens, hurricane lamps, aisle standards, draperies, carts, tables, umbrellas, etc., are used in this way. Many of these materials can be utilized in window and shop displays.

Other supplies and materials which might be found in the flower shop would include fertilizers, seeds and bulbs, peat moss, pebbles, sand, sheet moss, water picks, lapel vases, various prepared foliages, branches, wired chenille, gold letters, chenille stems, cattails, pampas grass and numerous seed pods and berries.

Many of the supplies and materials in the flower shop are sold and used only on certain holidays. Some of these are cones, berries, bells, Santas, ornaments, special candles, etc., for Christmas; hearts in various kinds and shapes and special containers for floral valentines; Madonna figurines and vases, bunnies, chicks, ducks, etc., for Easter, and wreaths or the prepared materials for making them for Memorial Day.

The items mentioned in this chapter are by no means all-inclusive, but are described principally for those not too familiar with the business. It is not meant to infer that every shop needs all of these items or even half of them to operate. A great number of the sug-

gested materials and supplies are not used by many good florists. Items considered indispensable by some are not even deemed practical by others. So much depends on the personal taste of the florist and his style of work. No two flower shops sell the identical kind of workmanship or use the same materials in their floral arrangements.

XVII * *Buying, Pricing and Discounts*

WHOLESALE FLOWER MARKETS

The principal sources of supply for cut flowers and plants for the retail florists are the wholesale flower markets or the commission houses located in concentrated areas in most of the larger cities. These markets are supplied by many growers, who either sell or make consignments of their flowers. Wholesale florists often carry a line of staple supplies in addition to flowers. Many of these markets open early in the morning and are often crowded with buyers from flower shops long before the retail stores are open. At other cities they do not open until 8 a.m., and the retailers conform to that policy.

Florists who operate at the smaller cities and towns which have no wholesale florists may make weekly trips to the nearest market to make purchases and leave orders for shipment on future dates. Much of this business, however, is done by telegraph and telephone. It is not unusual for retailers to place standing orders with wholesalers for a certain number of various kinds of flowers to be delivered daily, semi-weekly or weekly. It is not uncommon for the midwestern florist to have standing orders with California, Florida and Hawaiian wholesalers for certain flowers not available on his local market at all times, which are shipped to him by rail or air.

Many florists own greenhouses in which they grow much of their own stock. They dispose of their excess supply at wholesale. It is general in smaller cities to find the retail florist operating a retail business from his greenhouse, where he grows a good proportion of the flowers he sells.

THE BUYER

If there are several persons from one shop doing the buying, it should soon become obvious that better results could be obtained with one buyer. Duplication or omission of some items of needed merchandise would be avoided, and fewer errors would be made.

The buyer should be one who has a knowledge of the regular anticipated needs of the shop in addition to the requirements for the special orders which are booked in advance. He should know the policy of the shop, whether to buy high-quality, first-grade stock, average good flowers or low priced seconds. When rare, unusual or new varieties of flowers appear on the market, his knowledge of the business should aid him in making a decision about buying them. He should have imagination and a knowledge of designing in order to buy advantageously. He should know whether the management prefers doing business with one or two wholesalers or whether it prefers doing some business with several or all of them. If he concentrates his buying at a few places, those wholesalers undoubtedly would give him preference on scarce and hard-to-get merchandise, which is often a definite advantage in rush holiday seasons. The wholesalers would be so conversant with the needs and wishes of that buyer that the latter could do his buying by phone.

OVERSTOCKING

On smaller wholesale markets it is a good practice to do business with all commission houses, distributing the orders as evenly as possible without sacrificing quality, price or service. Whenever possible, in buying, as well as in selling, it is better not to play favorites, giving one seller or buyer preference over another. In the long run, that policy will pay off as a good business practice, regardless of the few times that special privileges might have been gained on the other plan. Naturally, the wholesaler who gives the best stock at the best price will have a preference, and his continued reliability will merit more future business without a feeling of obligation for special favors granted.

The quickest way to lose money and go into the red is through buying too heavily and overstocking the refrigerators with flowers. True, the shop may want a large display of flowers of every kind and color to stimulate sales interest, but if there are not sufficient customers to buy up that merchandise within a couple of days it is a complete loss. The loss of one flower in each dozen purchases amounts to the loss of the net profit on the entire business. How much better for the florist to have a modest assortment of flowers, every one of which will be sold before it deteriorates in any way.

There is no excuse for the shop near a market to be overstocked at any time, because that florist can replenish his stock two or three times a day. At holiday time, it is easy for the buyer to become panicky and feel that the market will be sold out before he has all of his orders filled. He might overbuy and carry over a number of plants or flowers for which there will be no market on the succeeding days. To overcome that loss the profits for several days to come would have to be sacrificed. It would have been better to underbuy, sell out completely, make a fair profit and, at the same time, furnish good merchandise on every order. Even if a few last minute sales are lost, the profit on those few sales would mean nothing compared to the possible loss by the other method at holiday seasons.

Certainly, every good florist is expected to have a varied stock and an ample supply to make good sales growth, but the buyer should always proceed with caution. If he does not, that shop soon will have the reputation for selling inferior flowers. It is too often the practice to hold fresh cut flowers back and sell first the ones purchased a few days before. The next day the same procedure is followed, and so on and on. Consequently, stale flowers are always sold. Would not it be a better policy to throw out the preceding day's purchase and begin over again, selling fresh flowers every day?

It is true that in some types of work a more developed flower is desired, such as a partly open rose in decorations or funeral work. In those few cases flowers a day or two old serve the purpose to good advantage. Those flowers, however, would be more beautiful

if they were left in the warm air to open to the perfect stage for use in that work and then put back into the refrigerator to harden a bit before using.

A shop selling old flowers for just a few months might soon ruin its good reputation for fine flowers of lasting quality. It is the responsibility of the buyer and the manager, or owner, to see that that mistake is not made for their own protection, as well as that of the public. The buying public often judges an entire industry by the unethical practices of the few.

PRICING

Price is of great importance in any retail business. It is a subject often discussed by florists, and the arguments about what constitutes a fair markup on flowers are many. The answer always simmers down to a question of policy, which may mean different things in different shops. The florists whose appeal to their customers is one of low price argue that double the purchase price is sufficient and fair. The other florists who operate on a service and quality policy rightly hold that a fair markup is three times or more.

Surveys made show that the florists' costs on plants and cut flowers vary from thirty-six to forty-six per cent of gross sales, with accessories and supplies taking up an additional six per cent. Those shops whose markup is three times or more the cost of the flowers in their business offset that large margin by adding more in supplies, accessories and service. The florist who uses beautiful boxes and wrappings, who spends much time on arrangement and design, with the finest of artistry and accessories, often is giving more to the appreciative customer than the one who cuts corners.

The markup on vases and gift items generally is double the cost or a fraction less.

A reasonable price to one customer might mean the contrary to another. One customer might appreciate many added services given with the order, whereas another customer just wants so many flowers. An arrangement of beauty to one might be worth \$10, whereas the same arrangement to another is just so many flowers. Much of it

is a matter of education, and the rest is a case of economics. A dollar to some people means much more than it does to others. The florist must decide to which class he will appeal. The great middle class would be the best choice in most locations.

Along the same line, a good flower to one person might be considered insignificant to another. Some persons do not consider a rose good unless it has a stem of more than eighteen inches. For that reason a florist should be explicit in pricing and describing his flowers to his customers.

Common sense would tell the florist, and the customer also, that roses in a corsage, spray or design would necessarily sell for more than they do by the dozen. The work and materials used on those designs might be more than four times the cost of the flowers themselves.

Our own experience has shown us that customers making a personal selection of flowers often choose completed arrangements from the refrigerator. Each one of them is priced complete with the container. The same flowers not arranged and not in a container might sell for \$5, in contrast to a complete arrangement for \$10 in a vase or bowl that had cost but \$1. Customers of the florist most often buy effect and sentiment expressed in flower arrangement. Work on an arrangement is itself often worth more than the flowers. Another experiment we have tried with plants further substantiates this policy. A plant with added touches and elegant decoration will sell first at twice the price of a similar plant with an ordinary decoration.

Every florist should know what his costs are and must then determine for himself at what price he should sell his merchandise. Labor, rent, packaging, accessories, delivery, utilities, advertising, insurance, etc., all have a direct effect on the amount which would be a fair selling price for his merchandise. Periodical analysis of business costs and profit enables the florist to judge accurately whether his selling price is too high or too low. Some operators prefer having a small exclusive business with a higher than average profit, whereas others prefer having a smaller percentage of profit and a larger volume of business.

Regardless of the method of operation every florist must set his own price policy. That is his privilege, and the way he wishes to operate his business should not be the concern of other competing florists. Too much time is spent worrying about the prices other florists place on their flowers. That time should be spend in the study of ways and means of improving service and merchandising. After some experience the florist may wish to change his policy, resorting to increased or decreased prices. That, too, is his privilege, but if he is smart, he will adhere to a definite policy.

PRICE LABELS

When cut flowers are brought in from the market or other merchandise is being unpacked, the employee handling that work should be charged with the responsibility of pricing that stock. All plants, all cut flowers and vases or accessories should be plainly marked with their selling prices. Although this is not the practice in many flower shops, particularly the smaller ones, it cannot be stated too strongly that every article should be plainly labeled with the selling price.

Larger businesses of every kind know the value of pricing every article, and good salesmen agree that the price-labeled article gives the customer added confidence when making purchases. It also gives the salesperson confidence and prevents errors. Anyone can picture the reaction of a customer who might drop in and price certain flowers or articles which are not marked as to price and then come later to another salesperson and have different prices quoted for the same articles. That customer would be justified in changing florists.

The florist has one problem peculiar to his business as far as price is concerned. That is the problem of greatly fluctuating prices on flowers, with the extreme peak prices prevailing at holiday times. Explaining that factor to customers requires time and patience on the part of the florist, who often is held responsible for the price variation by his customers. They cannot realize why roses which sold at \$5 early in December should be \$10 at Christmas. One way to explain the matter is by drawing a comparison to vegetables, such as

tomatoes, which sell in the summer at 50 cents per basket and in the winter at greatly increased prices. The fluctuating cost of flowers is another good argument in favor of pricing all the blooms as they come into the shop.

Steps are being taken by some progressive wholesale flower distributors to stabilize the prices on their flowers at a certain year-round amount. Their efforts are influencing others in the same direction. This matter will be covered more fully in the chapter, "Grower and Wholesaler."

There are several different kinds of price labels on the market which are particularly suited to the florists' needs. They adapt themselves for use on plants, arrangements or vases of cut flowers. Gummed labels are satisfactory on pottery and glassware.

Some of the progressive florists have inaugurated the practice of offering some of their flowers at a lower mark-up for cash-and-carry sales to offset competition from grocery markets. The prepackaging of flowers probably will encourage this trend. (See chapter, "Packaging and Prepackaging.") The housewife who wants a few flowers for her home should not have to pay a premium for them, having her purchase placed on a par with those requiring added service, such as delivery, charging, gift packing or arranging. The florist is anxious to increase flower use in everyday home life and should exert every effort to have attractive, convenient and economical flowers for that purpose for the shopping housewife.

DISCOUNTS

The granting of discounts on some orders is the subject of much discussion among florists. Some consider it an unethical practice to give discounts to companies and organizations, while others make it a general policy. That practice is not unethical and should not be referred to as such, because every merchant has the right to price his merchandise in any manner he likes. If he wishes to grant discounts to half of his customers or to give away flowers with every purchase, that is his business, and he has a right to follow that policy. The practice, however, is pointless if done on a considerable

scale. It would be much simpler and better business practice if he reduced the price on all of his stock to offset the discounts and cost of giveaway flowers.

The florist who begins offering discounts to business firms and other organizations soon is caught in a vicious circle, and more and more customers begin asking for discounts. Even employees of those favored companies might ask for reduced prices or place their orders through the company offices to take advantage of them. If a discount policy is followed by a florist, the groups to whom the privilege is given should be defined definitely and limited, for example, to churches and charitable organizations only.

Every customer should receive the same treatment and pay the same prices in a flower shop. The personal friend becomes a customer when he is selecting flowers and will appreciate being treated as such. When buying his flowers, he should expect and receive personal attention and the customary courteous handling of his order. A friend does not look for special favors and reduced prices just because of that friendship. If he does expect that in business transactions he cannot be considered a real friend.

Morticians generally are placed on the discount list by the florist. They often are paid as much as twenty per cent commission or allowed a discount on all orders they place for families and friends. It is my opinion that most funeral directors of good reputation would rather not accept flower orders from their customers, but would much prefer referring them to a florist. If they can accommodate a bereaved person by placing an order for flowers with a good florist they are glad to do it without anticipating a discount. They are more interested in having fine flowers and arrangements for the funeral than they are in receiving any discount or commission. The florist offering the commission is in a way belittling his profession and losing the respect of morticians with whom he deals in doing this.

Discounts to other florists are another matter, and the twenty per cent commission should be paid in every case. This would apply whether the order is handled through a florists' telegraph associa-

tion or not. Many florists have agents in neighboring towns which do not have flower shops. These agents accept orders for the florist, make collections and are paid commissions based on the amount of the orders. Wholesale florists and others connected with the industry are generally given discounts as a matter of professional courtesy.

It is good practice to allow a substantial discount on all personal orders of employees of the flower shop. The amount of the discount, whether it be twenty per cent or fifty per cent, should apply to every employee.

The florist should make his own decision on reducing the price of flowers purchased in large quantities. These are not commonly classed as discounts. The customer who buys 100 corsages or 500 roses, all to be delivered to one address, should have some reduction in price because of the saving the florist can make on delivery and labor.

Our own policy on discounts is definite in that we offer no commissions whatever and give discounts only to employees, other florists and persons closely connected with the florists' industry. This policy was developed as a result of our own experience and is based on our own idea of business ethics. In spite of the general practice of other florists in offering discounts, we daily receive orders from hospitals, funeral homes, churches, and other organizations. Several larger industrial firms, which have in years past received discounts and commissions now place regular orders with us for their employees who are ill or bereaved. These facts lead us to the conclusion that companies, organizations and individuals are more interested in receiving good flowers and service than in discounts and commissions.

XVIII * *Salesmanship*

LIFE BLOOD OF BUSINESS

The life blood of the retail florist is the customer. He is an invited guest when he comes into the flower shop. The reception, treatment and satisfaction of that customer determine a florist's business success. The handling of that customer in filling his needs and wishes is salesmanship. The degree of satisfaction or disappointment of the customer also indicates to a great extent the qualifications of the salesperson and business ability of the florist.

Most of the expense and effort of advertising, merchandising or promotion can be lost by poor salesmanship—in other words, acceptance of the invitation to buy may be regretted by a customer. It takes coordination of all business policies, advertising, pricing, selling, designing, delivery, etc., to complete an efficient and profitable transaction. An extremely important phase in that process is selling, and the successful salesman understands the relation of selling to all of the other phases in the path of a flower order.

The weakest link in completing a flower order is frequently salesmanship. The person with the least knowledge of the business too often is delegated the important duty of selling or waiting on customers. Except for recording the details of the order, the customer in the hands of a poor salesman might just as well have been in a self-service store buying staple grocery items instead of flowers.

THE SALESPERSON

Advertising, merchandising and promotion are related to selling so closely that the dividing line is difficult to discern. For the purposes of this discussion, salesmanship will be limited to the technique of selling in person.

Good salesmanship is a benefit and compliment to the customer,

as well as a gain to the florist. Customers expect and look for good salesmanship.

In the flower shop, the personality of the salesperson is exceeded in importance only by the beauty and quality of floral arrangements themselves. There is strong appeal in a pleasant personality. When the salesperson has that qualification, more than half of his battle is won. He should always be natural and friendly. The qualities of poise, enthusiasm, tact, keen observation, self control, good judgment, adaptability, optimism, helpfulness, kindness, etc., are personality traits of undenied value. A superficial, insincere attitude is easily recognized and felt by a customer, and should not be tolerated in a flower shop.

A neat personal appearance and conservative-type clothes are desirable—and required by all large merchandising firms. However, they often are overlooked by many florists who feel that varied duties and workroom activities give an excuse to appear on the sales floor in slovenly dress, with a grimy face and soiled hands. The florist, although he may realize the importance of a neat personal appearance in large stores, often feels that it is not expected of him. Its importance and value are just as great to the florist. The same reasoning used by other merchants applies to him as well, even though it is more difficult for him to keep up a good personal appearance, as he has workroom duties in addition to selling. Some designers and workmen, in spite of their work with wet stems and soil, are able to maintain an immaculate appearance, while others cannot keep their clothes presentable more than a short time. That is largely a matter of self-discipline, habit and concentration.

The first impression a customer might receive in the shop is the personal appearance of the florist or salesman. Making every impression a good one helps any sale. Because the sense of sight is one of man's strongest senses, the appearance of the flower shop, its merchandise and personnel are of utmost importance. Some larger shops believe it to be a good business practice to furnish uniforms, smocks or jackets with name plates for all personnel.

A general knowledge of the business and complete information

about flowers and their use are vital to the salesperson. In addition to a good fundamental education, the technical and special lore of flowers should be entirely familiar. Being conversant with all kinds of flowers, accessories and their varied uses, makes their sale an easy task because the confidence, evident on the part of the seller, is conveyed to the buyer. Knowing the correct answers to questions about flowers immediately gives the customer assurance he is in good hands.

TRAINING AND KNOWLEDGE

Training for salesmanship takes real time and effort for the florist. In the rush of other duties he may overlook that training entirely and place his most inexperienced personnel on the sales floor. That is not a good business policy, even though these persons do call for help from more experienced members of the firm on orders requiring certain design or technical information. The person who waits on customers should know thoroughly the technique of flower design and shop policies in regard to credit, delivery, quality, etc.

Time spent by the florist and his staff studying tested sales methods will prove to be time exceedingly well spent. This need is recognized by leaders of the floral industry, and for that reason, more and more convention programs and clinics are placing greater emphasis on the subject of selling. The design schools today do not only demonstrate how to arrange flowers, but also show the florists and their employees how to present and sell them to the public.

Whenever a customer asks for a certain salesperson, designer, manager, or owner to help in making a purchase, that person should be available at once. The attitude should be gracious and solicitous, without causing any embarrassment or chagrin to the purchaser by making him feel in the least apologetic for disturbing the other work of that person.

THE GREETING

The approaching customer in a flower shop should receive immediate recognition from the florist or his salesperson. There is nothing so

painful as inattention while waiting to make a purchase. If the florist and his staff are busy with other customers, a nod or word will help until someone is free to serve him.

When meeting the customer, if it is someone you have helped before, greet him by calling his name if possible. The ability to remember names and use them in greetings and conversation is a great asset to any salesman. It is not wise to face a customer with a meaningless question, such as, "Do you want something?" or "Is there something I can show you?" "May I help you?" is trite and not direct. Instead say "What may I show you?" or words to that effect in a sensible direct query, indicating a willingness to be of service. Or if the customer is recognized, begin by saying, "Good morning, Mrs. Jones. What may we do for you today?"

The attitude of the salesperson can make a customer feel at home immediately, removing any feeling of timidity or strangeness. Engaging in a bit of general conversation is often in order, but some brief comment should be sufficient without detracting from a businesslike approach to the sales transaction.

OPTIMISM AN ASSET

The customer in conversation will often ask, "How's business?" The reply of the florist may do much to make a good or bad impression, which will be taken on by the customer and repeated to friends and acquaintances. For that reason, the answer to that question should always be favorable. If the florist cannot honestly say that business is fine or rushing, he can always say truthfully that he is busy. There should never be a day in the flower shop when that is not true, because there is always plenty to be done in the way of cleaning and preparation and rearranging of stock when all orders are filled.

People like to feel that they are patronizing a busy and progressive shop. They shun the discouraged grump, the griper and the crêpe-hanger who is always complaining about bad business, his competitor, hard work or slow days.

Optimism goes a long way in making the association of buyer and seller a pleasant experience. A smile without mention of one's own

troubles, at the same time being a sympathetic listener to the customers' troubles, is smart behavior in salesmanship. The customer, whose main interest is his order and not the florist's problems, will remember the store as a pleasant place to shop, relax and forget his own troubles.

Florists generally agree that their customers are the finest class of people. Persons who buy flowers have in their emotional make-up those good traits which make kind, pleasant personalities. They are thoughtful persons who are trying to express their thoughts and emotions to friends by sending flowers. Even when they are buying flowers for themselves or their homes, they are expressing a love of beauty. Those people are the understanding and patient customers the florist is always delighted to meet.

There is, however, a minority of customers who at first are more difficult to handle and furnish a problem to the salesperson. If the florist uses tact, kindness, patience and common sense in dealing with them the first few times, they will soon be in the majority group of ideal customers. Gaining this confidence in the florist removes most of the traits which make them difficult customers in the beginning.

Some of the persons in the minority group who are difficult at first might be classified or described as follows: The high-brow, condescending in manner; the babbler, too talkative and boring; the bashful type, timid because he is a stranger or maybe because he has not bought flowers before; the arrogant type, a know-it-all and egotistical; the demanding buyer, one who makes unreasonable demands for service and flowers; the whiner, a chronic complainer who is never pleased; the shopper, who likes to browse and ask questions; the reckless type, who buys wantonly regardless of price; the cautious type, who goes into great detail; the definite type, who knows what he wants and says so; the careless type, who doesn't care what is sent; the penny pincher, whose main interest is price; the nervous type, jumping from one thing to another; the slow buyer, who can't decide and wants to see everything; and the doubting type, suspicious of everything.

The salesperson after a few words can pigeonhole the customer as to type. By using his head, remaining calm and avoiding all argument, the good salesman after a few encounters will no longer consider any customer undesirable. By word and action, he will refrain from assuming a superior attitude, thus keeping his customer from feeling ignorant whether it be about pronunciation or knowledge of flower varieties and qualities. His customer will leave thinking that the selection was his own and not that of the salesperson. In no case, should a customer be shunned, because there is no problem or trait in his behavior or personality which cannot be surmounted by good salesmanship to make his patronage in every way pleasant and profitable.

Many flower buyers do not know what they really want in the way of flowers or an arrangement when they come in. They have in mind some occasion, but generally begin by looking at different flowers. The tactful salesperson will show interest and secure from the customer the motive for the purchase to enable him to suggest appropriate flowers and a design to suit the occasion. In most cases that customer is interested primarily in expressing some human emotion or sentiment. He is buying an effect or benefit rather than the flowers themselves.

THE OCCASION

Giving undivided attention to the wishes and trend of thought of the customer and guiding him to make a proper selection takes concentration and genuine human interest on the part of the salesman. The customer's ego will be flattered, without his realizing at all that he was guided in expressing his wishes or motives.

Every florist has had the experience of talking to a customer who asked about a spray of flowers, when in reality he had in mind a bouquet for a sickroom rather than a funeral piece. A casual remark about the motive from the salesman will bring forth a response which definitely will indicate the occasion for which the flowers were intended.

The ability to remain calm and poised, without any indication of

rushing a customer to get to other work or to get the order completed, will hasten rather than retard the satisfactory completion of an order. To maintain this composure is not easy for the florist who is working on rush orders, who has persons calling him on the phone, who is planning his purchases of stock and is involved in many other things. Even though he has several employees who assume some of those responsibilities, his mind is still occupied with them. To keep his anxiety concealed from the customer is a talent which must be developed by every one who sells flowers.

THE PRESENTATION

Having determined the occasion for which the flowers are being purchased, the salesman moves into that phase of the transaction which may be referred to as the presentation. The manner in which he presents his suggestions may or may not create a desire in the mind of the customer. To lead a customer by creating in his mind a definite desire for certain flowers or arrangements, which the florist wishes to sell, is the mark of real salesmanship. Many factors in the display and quality of flowers are of great assistance in this regard.

Neatly arranged flowers in the refrigerator and a beautifully planned shop are definite incentives in creating a desire. Nothing should be permitted to detract from that appeal. A few wilted flowers in a vase of perfect blooms or a soiled, marred container will depreciate the value of the entire display. A few bad petals on one rose in a vase of fifty may prevent the sale of any of them.

The greatest aid in selling arrangements of cut flowers is the display of a few well designed bouquets in the shop or display refrigerator. The average flower buyer does not have the imagination to visualize different arrangements from a few descriptive words on the part of the salesperson. With a few samples to use as illustration, his task is simplified, and the customer can picture variations in color and flowers in his own arrangement. Most often he will make his selection from one on display. An arrangement which he saw in the display window may have been the inducement which caused him to enter the shop.

Flowers which are not easily available should not be used in the sample arrangements nor placed conspicuously in the display. It is folly to emphasize and create a desire for flowers which are scarce and difficult to obtain. The enthusiastic designer may use some of them in an arrangement to have something different to show, but his action only places a hurdle in the path of the salesperson. If, however, a customer does request sweet peas or violets, which at that time are scarce on the market, the clever salesperson will suggest instead heather, narcissi or anemones, which might be plentiful. Although the flowers requested may not be available, a little showmanship with flowers on hand will quickly overcome that small obstacle.

SELLING ATTRACTIVE FLOWERS

The good salesman in any event should be sincere and perfectly honest with his customer. If roses are of poor quality, he should not for any reason assure a customer that they will be satisfactory and long-lasting. Instead he should call attention to other flowers, such as carnations for fragrance and keeping qualities or gladioli for their unusual color and showy florets. If the flowers requested are not in his stock, but available on the market, the poorest alibi is a false reply that the flowers are not in season. His customer would admire him much more if he expressed his regret about having none of them in stock and called attention to other flowers which would fit the occasion and might serve the purpose even better. If that does not work, he should offer to order the other flowers for a later delivery.

CONTROLLED ENTHUSIASM

The tendency to exaggerate the beauty of a flower design in describing it to a customer is a fault easily acquired by the enthusiastic salesperson. Overenthusiasm of that kind leads only to disappointments and the loss of future orders from those customers. It is always poor policy to mislead a customer on the lasting quality of a flower or plant. If a florist makes a guarantee in that regard he should be sure that his promise will be kept.

Enthusiasm for his flowers and interest in the customer's problem are valuable traits, but the florist may easily develop them too much. His head may be so filled with ideas for his customer's order that he offers too many choices. Instead of helping and creating a desire he only baffles the customer by making a decision more difficult. It is smarter procedure to offer a few well considered suggestions at a time.

Some customers like to browse before talking to a salesman. They should always be welcomed and assisted later when they are ready. The florist who has many regular customers recognizes them, knows how to handle them, and even knows their likes and dislikes on varieties and colors of flowers.

POSITIVE APPROACH

In presenting flowers, the conversation should always be positive. In other words, the salesman should not say, "Those are not choice nor in good taste." Instead he should say, "These flowers would be more beautiful in your home," or "Wouldn't the color of these cymbidiums be more beautiful with your gown?" If the customer objects to some feature of a flower or design, the salesman in reply should agree, but at the same time should point out the desirable features, in no case causing an argument. In those cases he would reply beginning with the words, "Yes, but—." The customer might have objected to the lack of fragrance in gladioli, and the salesman, with hundreds of them to sell, should counter with "yes, but look at the size and color of those blossoms, and the buds still to open." The use of positive statements soon gets the customer in the mood of agreeing and nodding his head affirmatively.

The salesperson who knows his flowers will always have interesting things to say about flowers in addition to their beauty and quality. He will always mention how to take care of them and different ways in which they can be used. He will not just stand in front of the display and look at the flowers with his customer. If they are discussing roses, he will reach into the case and select one for his customer's close inspection and handling. The customer

may smell it, look at it and conclude with "I'll take two dozen of those." If a woman is looking at gardenias, and the shop is overstocked with camellias, the salesperson should reach into the case and let the customer handle one and admire its delicate texture. That action generally breaks down sales resistance and leads to a purchase twice as valuable to the store as the one originally contemplated.

The handling of an arrangement, plant or flower by the salesperson in presenting it for selection shows interest and permits better inspection. If the plant happens to be on the floor, it should be picked up, placed on a table and turned around for the admiration of the customer. Flowers always should be handled carefully and presented in a manner indicating esteem and appreciation.

There are several good sales aids for the flower shop. A scrapbook containing newspaper clippings and photographs of decorations and flower designs by the florist is convenient. Some florists have color slides and projectors to visualize their work effectively. They also have consultation rooms which are used in planning parties and decorations.

AGREEING ON THE PRICE

A common criticism of the florists' selling technique is that they begin their sales from the wrong end, putting the subject of price early in the conversation, before making a presentation of flowers and ideas. The subject of price should not be discussed until after the presentation, unless it is brought up by the customer before then. Even then it should not predominate in the transaction. Never should a florist open with the query, "How much do you wish to spend?"

While talking about appropriate flowers and their arrangement for the occasion, the flowers in the display case bearing their price labels may be making an impression in the mind of the customer, assisting him in making a selection without necessitating his natural inquiry, "How much?"

High pressure salesmanship should never be tolerated in the flower shop. Most florists are more likely to undersell their customers.

Either extreme is poor salesmanship. Striking the happy medium is one of the psychological problems of the salesman who must judge every customer. When the penny pincher comes in, more effort should be used to make a sale that will be adequate for the occasion. When the reckless spender is a customer, the salesperson uses more caution.

STARTING PRICES

The safe procedure generally is to quote average prices. The high extreme might frighten the customer and lose a sale. The other extreme might lead to underselling. For instance, if a customer asks the price of hospital arrangements, the reply should not be, "From \$3.50 up." That reply puts too much emphasis on the minimum and generally ends in a small sale. Instead the salesperson should say, "The most popular arrangements for that purpose vary from \$5 to \$10 each. I suppose you would like an average one." Most often the customer will reply, "Fix something nice for \$6 or \$7.50." Every buyer likes to be considered at least average and will save face by making an average purchase for fear he might be considered cheap.

Florists should have definite policies specifying minimum prices on such items as centerpieces, hospital arrangements, church decorations, etc. It is good business to set those prices at a level at which a presentable arrangement can be made. If that minimum is too low, that result cannot be satisfactory to the customer or the florist. Inadequate prices lead to poor workmanship and the use of inferior flowers, and they back-fire by giving the florist a poor reputation.

In speaking of flowers the salesman should never use the word, cheap, because it carries with it a connotation of inferior quality. The word, inexpensive, should always be used instead.

SETTING PRECEDENTS

Some florists have stated repeatedly that they cannot get their customers to pay more than \$2.50 for centerpieces or \$3 for funeral sprays. Those florists, through underselling, have permitted a precedent to develop in their shops which could have been prevented by

good salesmanship. To undo this damage requires education and tactful salesmanship. If those florists cannot make presentable and profitable designs at those prices, they should raise their minimum prices gradually and start doing work of which they can be justly proud and at the same time make a fair profit. They should have better designs and arrangements made as samples to assist the salesperson in educating the customers and instilling a desire for better arrangements at higher prices. This cannot be done in a few days, but will take months of careful promotion by the florist. All time and effort expended to accomplish that end will be extremely worth while.

After the customer has made a selection and decided on the price, the salesperson proceeds to close the transaction. He should begin immediately by writing the order and asking the customer if he would like to write a card to accompany the flowers.

CLOSING THE SALE

While writing the order, unless the customer is known to be one who makes charge purchases regularly, the question should then be, "Is this a cash purchase?" That query is preferred to one suggesting a charge purchase, because it assumes an affirmative reply. This procedure will result in more cash sales, thus reducing the overhead involved in bookkeeping, mailing statements and making collections.

Blank order forms, sometimes in duplicate or triplicate, supplied by stationery houses, are made especially for florists. It is essential that the salesperson fill out these order blanks completely and accurately, leaving no part of the order to memory. If the purchase is for a specific variety, color or type of flower for a certain occasion to be used in a certain place, all of that information should be written on the order. Orders should be marked charge, paid or C.O.D. and should indicate the price, time of delivery, message for the card, name and address of purchaser, date of purchase and the correct name and address of the person to whom the flowers are being sent.

The spelling of proper names and addresses should always be repeated by the salesperson to avoid costly and embarrassing errors. Everyone resents seeing his name misspelled, and errors of that kind

lead to the feeling that the florist is careless. The enclosure card and addressed envelope should be written neatly and legibly for the same reasons.

If the order is a cash sale, the salesperson should be careful in accepting payments. The recommended procedure is to repeat the amount tendered and, after securing the change, to count it back when giving it to the customer.

When someone has made a purchase and is waiting for his package, he should be asked to sit down if chairs are available. An adjacent table might have current magazines, scrap books, stereoscopic viewer, or small projector, with colored slides of flower arrangements to interest him while waiting. A convenient ash tray with matches is another appreciated consideration. Any action or facility to help make a customer feel at home and comfortable while waiting is valuable. If the salesperson is not otherwise occupied he might converse with the waiting customer in a natural and friendly spirit, discussing general topics or flowers.

THE SMALL ORDER

When the package is ready it should be handled with care and given to the waiting customer with a word of caution as to handling it or exposing it to extreme heat or cold. The added courtesy of opening and holding the door for the leaving customer is a gracious gesture, even though that assistance might not be necessary.

A sincerely spoken word of thanks can be as effective as a directly worded invitation to come in again. The final good impression as the customer leaves the flower shop may lead to repeated visits. The small courtesies, the natural words and sincere acts of thoughtfulness are things that count in effective selling. A friendly, gracious manner is a valuable asset to the sales personnel of every flower shop.

It should be unnecessary to say that the small order deserves the same careful service and attention as the large one. There are some salesmen who belittle the small order and consider it a trifling waste of time and talent. The good salesman knows the reaction of the

customer who comes in for one rose. Sometimes that customer even apologizes for the insignificance of his request. The smile of gratitude and appreciation from the buyer for the courtesies shown him more than compensate for the effort of handling the sale. That fine attitude reflects directly on the business also. The next time that same person may wish to order a \$50 design and will remember the kindness with which his last small order was handled by the florist.

The customer who makes frequent small purchases is more valuable than the one who places a few large orders occasionally. The customer who likes to have just a few flowers in the home or office all of the time is a greater flower lover than the one who buys them infrequently for parties or special occasions. The former customer is satisfying a desire which is contagious and will eventually be imitated by friends and acquaintances, making more flower sales for every florist.

Some persons actually prefer small arrangements and dainty things regardless of the cost. These are customers who believe it is better taste to send a bud vase with a few roses rather than a large arrangement for the sickroom or as a remembrance to a friend. The proper handling of those orders and the courteous treatment of those customers will lead to more and more purchases.

One rose can have as much meaning as a hundred, and the florist or salesperson should never belittle the orders of those discriminating customers. The low income wage earner and the occupants of small apartments and hotel rooms should be encouraged and thanked for their small purchases. In a few years they may be living in the palatial homes of the city and holding the influential positions in industry, with hundreds of flower orders to place. They will not forget the kindness of the florist who served them years before. Regardless of that prospect for larger future orders, their present small orders are in themselves of tremendous value to the florist.

The small child with a quarter to spend for flowers for mother should be given every possible consideration. He is the flower buyer of tomorrow, and the florist by obtaining his friendship early will see much of him in years to come. School children of every age

should be welcome customers in the flower shop, and their orders handled creditably and understandingly. Their parents will appreciate the sensible suggestions made to them and will resent any action fringing on high-pressure salesmanship.

SOME COMMON ERRORS

The tendency of a salesperson to concentrate his attention on the immediate benefit or profit of the order should be checked, because the intelligent florist views every order as a steppingstone to other orders. The long, broad view, looking to the future, is necessary to good salesmanship and business management. It should always be remembered by every florist and every employee that the order on hand is important, because its proper handling will inspire more orders from the buyer, the recipient and their friends.

To emphasize some of the previous discussion on salesmanship, it might be helpful to list some of the common errors made in selling flowers. These are things which every florist should try to prevent:

1. Rushing. Sometimes florists have more work than they can do comfortably. Their nervousness leads to irritability and spreads to all employees, reflecting in sales because it hampers the work and causes strain or resistance on the part of customers. Kind words to customers and employees from the florist on a rushing day will do much to relieve the strain.

2. Lack of knowledge or inexperience of the salesperson.

3. "How much do you wish to spend?" Price should never be discussed before presentation of the flowers with suggestions for their arrangement.

4. Complaining about the hard work and long hours. Even on holidays the customer is not interested in the florist's troubles. His interest is in his order.

5. Underselling.

6. Bad manners, indifference or discourtesy to the difficult customer.

7. The negative attitude. The best way to sell is to be positive and optimistic in all conversation and action.

THE TELEPHONE

The telephone has been referred to as the widest door of the flower shop. That is certainly true, because a large proportion might be as

much as ninety-five per cent and in others less, depending on the type of business and location of the shop.

After years of usage, the telephone has become one of the great factors in cutting down the sales cost of many businesses. Since it has been perfected to such a high degree of efficiency, it is a time-saver for both the seller and buyer. It is not unusual for the businessman and the housewife alike to transact much of their everyday buying via the telephone. Because it is so valuable in business as a selling medium, some definite practices and rules of etiquette have become established. Telephone companies have prepared booklets on the subject and furnish valuable hints on telephone salesmanship, which are available to subscribers upon request.

Every ring of the telephone is a compliment and an opportunity. A cardinal rule of telephone etiquette requires a prompt reply. The florist should have his telephone so located in his shop that it can be answered promptly at all times. When installation is made this should be considered carefully. The telephone company's representatives may suggest various extension instruments to make this an easy matter for the florist and his personnel. They also can offer valuable suggestions on the type of installation and the number of lines required to handle the load of calls on any number or series of numbers. By running a check or survey, the telephone company can advise a florist how many times in a given period he was called when the line was busy. If the busy signal occurs many times a day the installation of other phones might be recommended.

TELEPHONE SALESPERSONS

In some flower shops, the business volume requires the employment of full-time telephone salespersons. They are highly specialized experts who do most of the selling. Their training and experience makes them a well paid, efficient group of salesmen. In addition to the qualifications of floor sales personnel, they have developed the art of describing flowers and making the presentation without the advantage of meeting face to face. They are able to type their customers by the tone of their voices and proceed to do by telephone

what the floor salesman does when he meets his customer. Practice enables them to give the caller the feeling that he is receiving special attention and that his wishes are understood. Speaking slowly and sympathetically, and keeping one's own feelings under control when there might be an inclination to argue can help put the customer in a receptive frame of mind.

The good telephone salesman must have a telephone voice which sounds friendly and is easy to understand. To speak accurately and distinctly on the telephone requires practice and experience. To transmit friendliness and enthusiasm in speaking is a natural trait which can be developed. On a busy day it is important to maintain a calm voice. Since impatience can be detected readily from one's voice, it is a good idea to pause just a moment and dispose of any feeling of annoyance before speaking on the telephone.

ANSWER PROMPTLY

It always should be remembered that the customer appreciates prompt recognition when the phone rings, as much as or more so than the customer who enters the shop. At the first ring the phone should be answered, and shop identification and the name of the salesperson should be given, such as "Smith Flowers, Mr. Jones speaking." That immediately answers two questions in the mind of the customer. If the buyer asks for another salesman or member of the personnel, he should be summoned promptly. If he is busy with another call or customer the caller should be asked for the number, unless he prefers to hold the wire. If the person asked for seems to be occupied too long a time, go back to the phone and explain to the waiting caller, "Mr. James is still busy. Would you like to leave a message, or may someone else help you?"

Good manners alone would keep anyone from calling or speaking in a loud voice while someone is waiting on the line. If the telephone salesman must leave the phone to secure any information, he should excuse himself and hold the wire by pushing a hold button, thus cutting any noise or audible conversation from the ears of the customer. Confusion and other conversation in the shop should

not take place near the telephone as they distract both the order taker and the caller.

It often is difficult to get the correct spelling of proper names on the telephone, because many letters, such as F and S, B and V, D and B, etc., sound alike. In repeating words to the customer, the telephone salesperson should be definite and exact on letters easily misunderstood by saying, "D as in dog," or "B as in boy," etc.

The importance of the greeting, the occasion, the presentation, pricing and closing of the sale are all as valuable and applicable in selling by telephone as they are when dealing with a customer face to face. All requirements of good salesmanship apply to selling on the telephone. The customer's phone order deserves the utmost in service and consideration.

tone of voice

The tone of voice of the salesman should be as friendly, confident and distinct as possible. There should be no misunderstanding on the part of the customer about any part of the order, in spite of the fact that hurried telephone conversations take tact on the part of the seller. It is good business to repeat the entire order to the customer before thanking him and ending the conversation. At the same time, the conversation should be brief and limited to essentials, with irrelevant explanations omitted. A businesslike manner gives the impression of good organization.

The florist should realize that telephone salesmanship is not to be treated in a haphazard way. If anything, it requires more finesse and keenly sensitive technique than does selling in person.

Florists have various policies concerning the direct solicitation of orders from customers and prospective buyers. It is a subject that falls midway between that of salesmanship and promotion. For that reason it deserves some discussion here. Some of the best salesmen in the world are firm advocates of selling by direct solicitation. Many flower shops follow that practice in various ways. For instance, when an engagement is announced, a salesman is dispatched to the home of the prospective bride to solicit an order for the wedding flowers.

Sometimes this is done in a subtle way by giving a floral gift or bridal book at the same time. In other cases, the solicitation is not so direct, in that a letter is mailed asking for an appointment to discuss wedding flowers, or a phone call is made for the same purpose. The results in a large part hinge on the subtlety and approach made by the salesman.

In some shops it is customary to solicit orders from suppliers, other merchants and builders when there is an opening of a new store, office, restaurant or building. This often is done by the florist at the request of the owner of the new establishment. The motive might be selfish on the part of that owner in that he wishes his favorite florist to have charge of most of the flower orders. However, the florist might not receive the welcome reception he expects at the hands of the firms to whom he is trying to sell flowers. They, too, have their favorite florists.

Flower orders from schools for graduation ceremonies, from clubs for Christmas festivities, and from businessmen for Christmas gifts to customers are often solicited by florists in person, by mail or telephone.

TELEPHONE SOLICITATION

Many florists do a substantial business through telephone solicitation of orders for wedding anniversaries, birthday anniversaries and holidays by telephoning the husbands a few days prior to the occasion. In some cases this is done at the request of the husband who has left those dates with the florist, asking that he be called and reminded of the dates upon which he should send flowers to his wife. Complying with his wishes is doing a definite businesslike service of a customer. Without that request, the action should be classified as direct solicitation.

The direct solicitation of funeral orders from families definitely is frowned upon by good florists everywhere and is referred to as "crêpe-chasing." In the same manner, the unethical lawyer is referred to as an "ambulance chaser." Many of the florists who consider this action unethical in the case of death adhere to the policy of direct

solicitation of orders for other occasions. Except for the fact that one occasion is sad and the others are festive, I can see no point in making a distinction. If a florist believes in direct solicitation, there is no reason for his choosing a particular occasion. However, the florist who refuses to impose on the privacy and sentiment of a bereaved family deserves commendation for his thoughtfulness.

It is not the prerogative of any florist to tell another how to operate his business or to prescribe the methods to be used in securing that business. Every florist is privileged to formulate his own policies. However, I believe that the florist who can build his business without direct solicitation will be respected and esteemed for his attitude.

I realize that my stand on this subject is extreme. Customers have asked us to contact their friends and relatives in regard to forthcoming weddings and parties. This we refuse to do by explaining that it is not our policy to solicit business in any direct manner. We ask them to have their friends or relatives telephone us to make an appointment, if they would like to have us discuss flowers and decorations with them. Our policy of no direct solicitation has been adhered to strictly since the day we opened a flower shop. I believe that people generally resent solicitation. They do not want to be sold; instead, they like to feel that they are buying and prefer selecting their own florist.

If every florist would take the same money, time and effort spent in direct solicitation and spend it in improving his shop, making flowers more attractive, promoting the sale of flowers by effective display and improving design and service, his own business would show much more rapid growth, and the industry as a whole would increase in professional stature and respect in the eyes of the public.

XIX * *Expediting the Order*

BY CAREFUL ORGANIZATION

The routine through which a flower order passes, after it has been taken by the salesperson, indicates the efficiency of a florist's operation. The path of that piece of paper through the flower shop—from the sales floor, through the office, workroom, delivery, posting, billing and payment—is a process which should be planned in detail. It takes trained personnel at every step of this operation to insure its successful completion. The path of that order on a credit sale has not made a complete circuit until the statement has been mailed and payment received. The coordination of those activities, with harmony and understanding of the work of each department concerned, is vital.

A flow chart could well be prepared by every florist who is interested in seeing that there is no wasted motion nor loose handling of that important slip of paper, the order, through his flower shop. Every florist has his own system and can map his chart to suit his own particular needs. That system should be definite and thoroughly understood by all employees. Whether the business is large or small, the same basic steps must be taken.

After the sale, an order may pass through as many as thirteen phases of handling before its completion, namely: 1. Entering on the sales record. 2. Addressing tags, delivery receipts and writing cards. 3. Sending the order to workroom or filing it for future handling on another date. 4. Sorting the orders for handling by the designers. 5. Selecting the flowers and designing them. 6. Detaching order from delivery tags and routing delivery. 7. Delivering the flowers. 8. Returning the delivery receipt and filing it. 9. Sending order back to office. 10. Posting charge to accounts receivable ledger.

11. Filing the original order. 12. Mailing the statement. 13. Payment.

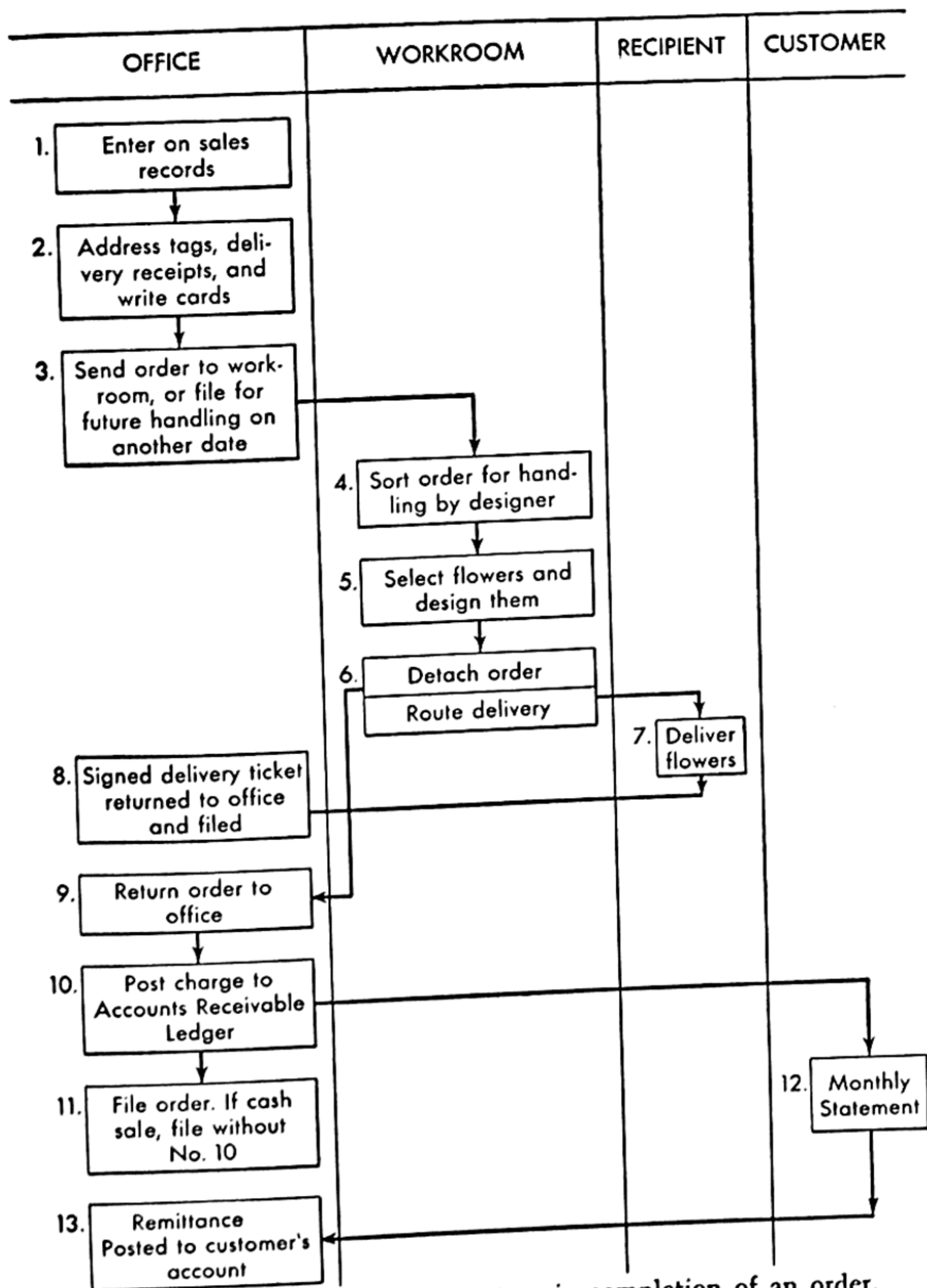
FLOW CHART

Upon its face this list might seem too elementary for mention. However, each one of those steps is sufficiently important to receive thoughtful consideration. Perfect salesmanship, followed by the correct handling of each one of these phases of the order, would give any flower shop an ideal business procedure. If there are any that near perfection the human element must be missing, because the production line in a flower shop is by no means mechanical. The work is done largely by human hands, and the results can only be as perfect as the hands and minds back of them. Every florist can find ways to improve the handling of orders in his flower shop.

The sample flow chart on facing page illustrates the handling of a flower order in the retail shop. Any step in that procedure involving unnecessary motion or effort means lost efficiency. Not every order goes through every phase. For instance, the paid order or cash sale skips steps Nos. 10, 12 and 13, in which case the payment is handled in step No. 1. If the order is both cash and carry, steps 6, 7 and 8 would not be involved either.

The source of the order does not affect the flow chart. In other words, the order placed in person, by telephone, by telegraph or by mail follows the same path.

After receiving an order the first step is entering it on a sales record as a charge or cash purchase. This may be handled in a number of ways. If duplicate orders are made, the carbon may be filed for totaling at the end of the day. Where duplicate copies are not used, the original order may be passed to the office for the proper recording, which may be on a cash register record system or day book, depending on the bookkeeping system. The bookkeeper who makes these entries checks the order for accuracy of figures and completeness of information. If the salesperson has failed to complete any part of the order the bookkeeper passes it back for correction.



Flow chart showing necessary steps in completion of an order.

THE ENCLOSURE CARD

The second handling is that of addressing tag envelopes and delivery receipts and writing cards. This may be handled in the office or it might be a duty of the salesperson, in which case this activity becomes part of the writing of the order. In most cases, more efficiency is gained if these cards and tags are written by specified office personnel rather than busy salespersons.

This clerical work can be done well by less expensive employees, who are selected for their ability at copy work and penmanship. It is valuable to have neat, attractive, legible handwriting on all enclosure cards accompanying flower gifts. That part of the gift is one of the first things sought by the recipient, and often it is kept for the sentiment it conveys. Its attractiveness adds to the beauty of the gift. Every card deserves accuracy in spelling, as well as beauty in penmanship and balance, when it is written by the florist.

When the customer writes his own card, the florist is responsible only for the addressing of tags, envelopes and delivery receipts. That detail demands absolute accuracy to prevent costly trips to incorrect addresses or delivery at the wrong time.

SORTING ORDERS

The order is then sent to the workroom for execution, or it is filed for delivery on a subsequent date. A file of seven compartments, marked with the days of the week, is convenient for the latter purpose. Each day those orders are removed for handling on that date. Those files are referred to regularly by the florist and buyer, enabling them to anticipate the need for flowers and supplies on future dates.

Each morning, or late the evening before, the orders should be placed in a wall pocket conveniently located in the workroom. The manager then sorts the orders for time deliveries and distributes orders to various designers. These orders may be placed on their respective tables, or initialed for the attention of certain workers.

The designers then proceed to select the flowers and arrange

them in accordance with the instructions on the orders. That part of the work is of major importance. How an order is filled may readily spell satisfaction of a customer and profit for the shop, or their opposites. The ability of the designer in both artistry and speed, in addition to his consciousness of the customer's wishes and the cost of the flowers, is demonstrated in this phase of the order.

The designer will be guided in his work by the policy of the shop in regard to filling orders. If that policy is highly ethical, it guarantees the same attention to every order, regardless of the recipient, the buyer or the amount of the order. The designer, however, should notice the names of both the customer and the recipient. If they are familiar names in the shop, he will have a knowledge of their likes and dislikes for certain flowers, colors and designs.

The shop policy also will dictate that only fresh flowers be used to fill orders. Any flowers not suitable for that purpose should be dumped.

The open order, the one which leaves the entire selection of flowers and design in the hands of the florist, is a joy to every designer. Rather than grasping it as a chance to make an excess profit or as an outlet for old flowers, he should view it as an opportunity to show the customer his ingenuity at design and his anxiety to please. That will permit him to use flowers which are plentiful in an interesting manner, suitable to the occasion. The open order, rather than being slighted, deserves conscientious attention, commensurate to the customer's confidence when he placed the order.

Because they are fair and have handled their orders so well, some shops report receiving more open than specific orders. That is a compliment to any florist.

The standing order should be handled in the same manner. It is easy to neglect and take for granted those orders which appear with certain regularity. After a few costly experiences, the loss of those orders brings the florist to attention too late.

Many of the large business firms and organizations at large cities place open orders for flowers at a fixed price for employees who are ill or bereaved. That practice has developed and is spreading,

because florists are proving that the best way to say it is to "Say It with Flowers."

THE FILLED ORDER

After the flowers have been selected and arranged, they are ready for wrapping and delivery. The enclosure card is attached to the package, and the package then is routed for delivery. When delivery of the load is completed, the deliveryman returns the signed delivery receipts to the office for filing.

The order blank has then served its usefulness in the workroom and should be placed in a wall pocket or receptacle for return to the office, where the charge, if any, is posted to the accounts receivable ledger. The original order after posting, is then filed away with other filled orders, including paid or C.O.D. orders.

The final steps in completing the circuit of the order are the mailing of the statements and crediting accounts with the resulting payments.

After tracing the route of an order through a flower shop, it is obvious that each phase requires the constant vigilance of the florist. Mishandling or loss of orders at any point in their progress results in dissatisfied customers, loss of integrity and less business for the florist.

XX * *Records, Credits and Collections*

BASIC NEED FOR RECORDS

Years ago it was common practice for most florists to keep sketchy records on scraps of paper. Rarely did they bother to make entries in the pocket notebooks they carried. They generally made change from their pockets and paid invoices on delivery from the same pocket cash fund. The difference between their purchases and sales constituted the profit and surplus capital. As long as they had cash, they were happy and solvent. Doing business today is not that simple.

Driving a car at night without lights is no more dangerous than operating a flower shop today without adequate records.

A complete and accurate system of records forms the foundation of every successful retail operation. Those records in the flower shop spotlight and show the effectiveness of the firm's policies and management, outlining distinctly every phase of the business.

A direct result of groping blindly in the dark without sufficient records is usually the gradual dissipation of the profits which precedes business failure. Bankruptcy courts report that only about one fourth of the bankrupt businesses they examine keep adequate records.

PURPOSE OF ACCOUNTING

The florist who keeps records and uses them efficiently often can avert business failure, because his records will forewarn him. His action through the proper use of records and accounting will enable him not only to conserve, but also to capitalize on, the talents of good salesmanship, the artistry of designing, the investment in equipment and expenditures for advertising and promotion.

Prior to the widespread application of income tax laws, the small businessman kept inadequate records, and in many cases, none at all. Many florists today keep records primarily to meet the minimum requirements of laws pertaining to taxes on income, sales and payroll. Instead, they should be keeping those records to make their flower shops operate more efficiently and profitably.

The objective of all business endeavor is to make a profit. Just because an item is purchased for \$1 and sold for \$2 does not necessarily mean that the florist is making a profit. On the contrary, an analysis of his business might show that he is losing money on transactions of that kind. Operation and overhead expenses might be consuming more than the difference between the purchase and selling price of his merchandise.

The florist's accounting system enables him to determine whether or not he is operating at a profit. The value of that system is demonstrated by its primary function of assisting him to secure not merely a profit but the maximum profit possible. Those detailed records reflect a true picture of the various operations in a flower shop and the source or cause of profit or loss.

There are three ways in which profit may be increased or loss reduced, on a given volume of business: Namely, increase the selling price, to buy at a decreased price or to reduce the overhead and operating costs. The increased selling price to make more profit should be a last resort. However, the florist who does not keep sufficient records generally jumps to the conclusion that increasing selling prices is his only alternative. That is obviously fallacious reasoning. Adhering to that practice generally results in a greatly decreased volume of business.

Regular study and analysis of the accounting picture of his business gives the florist an opportunity to keep his costs in correct proportion to his sales. Some of the costs are flexible and others are fixed. The drive to keep costs at a minimum should first be aimed at the flexible operating costs, such as delivery or advertising.

Instead of making snap decisions and acting on hunches in determining retail policies, the florist can use his accounting records to

plan an intelligent program based on fact, thereby projecting his thinking into the future. Long-range planning and expansion come about through the mapping of a program of action based on the facts furnished by accounting records.

ESSENTIAL BOOKKEEPING RECORDS

The bookkeeping system of a flower shop need not be complicated, but it should be sufficiently complete to furnish accurate information about any phase of the business. A thorough knowledge of arithmetic and simple bookkeeping is all that is required. Keeping those records in proper form to be of practical use and easily available for analysis takes time and painstaking effort. Yet, that latter activity is too important to a florist to be considered merely as spare-time work to be done when and if he finds the time.

The florist who is opening a new shop and feels uncertain about a system of records should have an accountant explain a practical layout to suit his needs. He could well seek out for himself suggested systems of accounting for the small business in books on that subject available at any public library. The United States government printing office has printed a manual, "Record Keeping for Small Stores," which is complete and may be purchased for 50 cents. Any stationery supply house which handles systems will make helpful suggestions on forms and books for the beginning florist.

WHO KEEPS THE BOOKS?

The business volume of most flower shops does not warrant the full-time employment of a bookkeeper or accountant. The owner or one of the employees may take this responsibility with other duties in addition. In many instances, bookkeeping service firms are engaged to handle this work—posting, mailing statements and preparing analyses for the florist. When the business warrants, the employment of a bookkeeper is recommended, unless the owner himself wishes to assume this work. It would seem, however, that his services would be more valuable in other phases of the business.

The single-entry system is recommended for the great majority of

florists. In one book in chronological order every transaction is recorded as it occurs. For example, a day might begin with the following book entries in their respective columns: Charge sale, cash sale, credit of an account receivable, cash paid out for supplies, check written in payment of month's invoices for flowers purchased, etc. At the end of the day the various columns should be added to give the florist the following totals: Credit sales, cash sales, payments received on account and amounts paid out for various expenses and purchases. These totals are checked and balanced with the cash drawer or register by the bookkeeper. That record would also give the total amount of sales tax collected that day in states where sales tax laws are in force.

Instead of the book, cash registers which record this same information may be used with various key codes instead of columns. The name of the person or company involved in the transaction may be written in the space provided on the cash register tape.

The receipts on charge accounts are transferred from this daily record to the accounts receivable ledger by the bookkeeper.

Each day the sales totals and other transactions should be entered in a summary ledger with sections to cover the various branches of the business such as sales, collections, merchandise bought, expenses, etc. At the end of each month the sections should be totaled and entered on the summary page for computing annual totals. That one summary book contains all of the information necessary for the preparation of all tax returns and also furnishes the florist the complete data he should have to manage his business properly.

With the complete and practical systems available today, a florist on a minute's notice can refer to the record and tell how much merchandise of various kinds he has purchased in a given period, how much he paid out for labor and wages, rent, interest, taxes, utilities, automobile expense, advertising, telephone, telegrams, express, charity, etc. Such records also have a summary of sales, charge and cash, along with the amounts received on account. With all this information at hand, the alert florist will not neglect his duty to put them to work for his business.

The folly of keeping records primarily for tax purposes is apparent in too many flower shops. Haphazard management exists in the same shops in which the florists pay scant attention to their records. The greatest waste in those shops lies in the failure to use the records.

Records are tools in efficient flower shop management. The sales records, for instance, indicate the trend of business volume. The comparative daily, weekly and monthly sales showing an increase or decline may be used as a guide for action, after the reason for the trend is determined. The sales records also are of great help in buying merchandise.

Every florist should have a sales record showing the comparative sales per month for the past five years. The trend of his sales volume will assist him in placing advance orders for flowers and accessories. If the business volume is increasing steadily, for example, he would be justified in placing comparatively larger orders for stock for approaching holidays.

Florists find it advisable to keep a detailed record of business sales and purchases for Easter, Christmas and other flower holidays. As those seasons approach the manager can refer to them and see what was purchased the previous years, what price paid for it, how well items sold, what was not sold, what kind of weather prevailed and how it affected consumer buying, etc. Then he can proceed with more assurance in his buying and planning for extra help, deliveries, and advertising. These special holiday summaries should indicate every fact in his experience which might help in planning his work in the future.

The sales records also may be used to gauge the effectiveness of his advertising program. Whether the resulting increases in volume are worth his expenditures for advertising and promotion can be determined after a reasonable period of time. For instance, if his advertising stressed his services for party and wedding decorations, he can tell by checking his records whether or not this department of his business has increased in proportion. Many shops have their sales records so complete that they know how much business they have done in cut flowers, plants, funeral flowers, corsages, weddings, etc.

They keep this detailed record because it is a practical help to them in the operation of their shops. This information may be secured from cash register tape or recorded by the bookkeeper from the sales slips or order blanks.

PROFIT-AND-LOSS STATEMENTS

Complete bookkeeping records enable a florist to prepare a profit-and-loss statement easily and quickly at any time, covering any period of his operation. These statements should be prepared every month as a business summary to show exactly what the business is doing. With that compact statement of sales, costs and percentages, the florist can map intelligently his program for the following month.

There is no reason for any florist to be selfish with his business records and percentages. The sharing of that information ultimately will benefit him. It was through cooperation of this kind that the Florists' Telegraph Delivery Association secured information on a cross section of the retail shops, as shown in the accompanying table. These average percentage figures based on 1948 business in the profit-and-loss statement, are valuable to every florist as a guide to the effectiveness of his own management in comparison with that of other shops.

It is a sheer waste of time and money to keep accurate records if that activity is not followed regularly by a careful analysis. The florist who keeps the closest possible check on his business activities through frequent analyses and comparisons of his accounting records will be able to administer his operation most profitably. He will keep his selling prices and costs in a fair ratio maintaining always only a fair profit, because he knows that this policy will mean a continued steady business.

Because of different services and methods of operation, there are variations in the percentages of various shops. Being able to discover and understand the reasons for those differences is helpful as a guide in decreasing operating expenses and increasing profit.

The owner's salary or his withdrawals from the business always should be entered on the profit-and-loss statement. If this is not

done, the profit percentage will be out of line and will not present a true picture of the operation. His salary should be equalized over the entire year and not entered on the profit-and-loss statement a few times a year and omitted in other months. It is essential that the net

<i>Cost of Merchandise:</i>		
Cut flowers and plants	41.3%	
Accessories and supplies	6.0	
	<hr/>	47.3%
<i>Overhead and Operating Costs:</i>		
Wages and salaries	18.5%	
Delivery	3.4	
Advertising	3.2	
Insurance	.7	
Interest	.5	
Wrapping supplies	1.1	
Office supplies	.8	
Postage	.4	
Express and cartage out	.4	
Light and refrigeration	.8	
Taxes	.9	
Telephone and telegraph	1.2	
Rent	3.8	
Depreciation	.7	
Traveling and legal	.7	
Commissions to agents	.6	
Clearing house expense	.3	
Commissions on F.T.D. incoming	2.2	
Donations	.4	
Reserve charge for bad debts	.5	
Miscellaneous expense	2.4	
	<hr/>	43.5%
		9.2%
NET PROFIT		<hr/> 100.0%

profit does not include the owner's or manager's salary, which is deducted before analysis can rightly be made of the profit-and-loss statement.

The profit-and-loss statement is extremely important to the florist who should always have his eye on the net profit margin. Regardless of general business forecasts he can always be informed as to his own business trends—if he makes frequent use of profit-and-loss statements. It is his most effective weapon in plugging leaks of profit by securing full value on all expenditures, including buying, labor, advertising and collections.

Some florists, to keep designers and other employees profit-conscious, have the employees list the cost of merchandise used on the back of each order. If the firm is operating on a gross margin of forty-five per cent, those items should not exceed 45 cents for each dollar value of the order.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

With an accurate accounting system, the florist can prepare his own financial statement or balance sheet fairly easily. This is simply a systematic list of assets and liabilities to show the net worth of the business. This statement requires an inventory of merchandise and listing of fixed assets, such as furniture, fixtures and delivery cars at present values.

Comparison of current financial statements with those of previous years shows the florist the growth or decline of his financial condition. Banks, credit associations and business organizations require this statement in connection with loans or membership of the florist. The florist's net worth is generally much less than the real value of his business, because it does not include good will and other factors of value to a prospering business.

CREDIT AND COLLECTION POLICIES

A florist's records tell to what degree his policy of extending credit to customers is profitable. His handling of credit and collections is a large part of his system of accounting and deserves careful study. The mere recording of those accounts requires much of the time used in bookkeeping. Because of the large volume of telephone business in most flower shops, the credit purchases are far in excess of the cash purchases.

This portion of record keeping and the way in which the florist applies good business judgment in common-sense administration of his credit policy may well determine his ability to make his business a financial success.

When general business conditions are such that there are no real credit problems, florists can do a successful credit business in spite of

incompetence and inexperience. In more normal times and in periods when credit is a difficult problem that is impossible.

One reason more why florists do not have sound, established credit policies today is that they were artists first and later found that they had to be business men, too, in order to operate a profitable business.

The florist should first of all establish definitely and follow conscientiously, his credit policy, including the following points: Credit application; necessary information, whether written or verbal, to qualify for a charge account; investigation of references and opening a charge account, or refusing credit; the credit terms, deciding definitely on the due date and time of mailing statements; a systematic follow-up for the collection of delinquent accounts; the point at which further credit privileges will be refused to the customer whose account is delinquent; the engagement of outside collectors; the closing of accounts which show an unsatisfactory record of payment.

OPENING A CHARGE ACCOUNT

Because the average credit purchase of flowers is not large compared with purchases of furniture, hardware, etc., the florist is not justified in making a detailed credit investigation. However, that does not mean that he does not need a credit manager, even though the person who has that responsibility may also be bookkeeper and cashier. In many shops the owner assumes the responsibility for authorizing credit on new accounts.

Where the credit manager's duties are delegated to an employee, the responsibility of collections is usually included. Having that combined work will make that employee more cautious in extending credit. If he has the proper perspective, he will cooperate fully in all shop policies, making his work a stimulus to more sales and good will, rather than having lost orders because of his poor judgment and bad technique in dealing with customers.

There is no set procedure for opening a charge account which would be applicable and effective for every flower shop. The location,

size of city, the clientele, advertising policy and local custom all affect credit methods. A formal written application is not necessary, but in every case, the full name, address, telephone number and employment of the debtor should be secured, in addition to a few references. Whether or not the references are checked, the psychology of making their notation is good. Another bit of information on the credit card might well be the answer to the question, "Why did you select our shop? Were we recommended by a friend who is a customer? His name?" That gives the florist a good idea as to the source of his new accounts. This is valuable in testing the results of advertising, display and promotion.

When there is any question about the advisability of opening a charge account, further investigation should be made. Address, character, employment, and nature of references given have meaning to any credit man. Common sense will lead to a fair decision.

The applicant for credit who volunteers the most information is often the best risk. The persons whose names are prominent in industry or society, whose credit would be unquestioned, are generally the ones who proffer the most information when asking for the accommodation of a monthly charge account. The newcomer at a city or the customer who has never had a charge account, often can be judged fairly by character and position. In a few months, he may have a good record of paying performance.

Buyers of flowers, appreciating their beauty and message of sentiment, are frequently as considerate of their obligations to pay as they are of the friends they remember. They are not inclined to skip the debt or delay payment too long for fear that the florist might call their friends for more information, inferring that he had not paid for the gifts of flowers.

Because of the personal nature of his business and the expressions of emotion connected with it, as contrasted with many other trades, the florist's credit problems are looked upon in a different light. The florist or his credit manager is seldom forced to refuse flatly a request for credit. In any case, he could show diplomacy and suggest sending the order C.O.D., pending approval of the application.

It is a good policy to have a credit application card printed, with spaces for name, employment, etc., and the signature of the customer. The cards, when approved, can be filed. They are useful for a follow-up on collection of slow-paying accounts—or for information enabling the florist to contact his customer on any question pertaining to an order.

In most flower shops the credit terms are monthly. The purchases made during a month are due and payable by the tenth of the following month. On large purchases, where there has been little previous credit experience with, or knowledge of, the customer, the florist tactfully can request an advance part payment.

After an application for credit is accepted and investigated, the prospective credit customer should be advised of approval or called upon for more information. The request for more information often constitutes a polite refusal, because the applicant takes the hint and buys for cash. A well written note to the new customer advising him that an account has been opened in his name, inviting him to use it at his convenience, explaining other floral services and assuring satisfaction, is effective and business-like. The florist's thoughtfulness will give a new customer added confidence.

New accounts may be opened by telephone at the time an order is placed. Most often the credit information taken is not verified, although it is recorded and filed by the florist. The florist's credit manager must combine cold-blooded credit principles with confidence and faith in human nature and a keen insight into character. An overly lenient credit technique may end in being no policy at all. A few errors in judgment, demonstrated by slow-paying accounts and bad debts, are generally sufficient warning to cause the credit manager to change his free and easy policy.

THE ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE LEDGER

The recording of the sales slips or orders covering charge sales constitutes the accounts receivable ledger. This ledger most often consists of loose-leaf sheets, alphabetically arranged in a binder. When a large credit business volume exists, the sheets or cards are kept in a

file instead of a binder for added efficiency and convenience. This enables the bookkeeper to maintain the accounts in accurate alphabetical order at all times, without removing sheets from posts in a binder. Accounts with a balance owing should be kept in a file separate from the paid and closed accounts.

Each ledger sheet is headed with the name and address of the debtor. When a separate file is not kept on credit information, the telephone number, place of employment and references may also be noted in the heading of the ledger sheet. From the charge slips the bookkeeper records the sale, entering the date, description or order number and amount of the purchase on the debit side of the sheet. As payments are received on the account or allowances and adjustments made for returned merchandise, etc., they are entered in the same way on the credit side of the sheet, balancing the debits covered by the payment or credit. These credits may be posted from the day book, the duplicate money receipts or the cash register tape, depending on the bookkeeping plan.

Other ledger systems may be used where duplicate or triplicate sales slips are made. The copies of the charge slips may be filed alphabetically instead of posting them in a ledger. Each one of these slips bears a cumulative total of previous charges, with the final amount owed totaled on the bottom of the last charge slip in a space provided for that purpose. In this system the sales slips instead of a more formal statement are mailed.

Many florists use order blank machines for writing up all orders, each order having imprinted upon it a serial number, and the copies are utilized as afore-mentioned. Any missing number in the series will serve as a check against loss of orders, because one set of the copies is kept in numerical order.

Some florists do not use this system because too much time is consumed in keeping it in order. In many cases the missing numbers are found in the file containing orders not filled, because in a flower shop orders are often placed weeks ahead of time, which prevents the series of copies from being completed until all are filled. It is also

argued that the possible loss of an order or two a year is not worth the time consumed in keeping this record.

Flower shops which do a very large business use bookkeeping machines for posting of debits and credits. The statement for the customer is made in the same operation and is always ready for release in the mail. At the end of the month the statements are pulled and stuffed for mailing. Every florist should consider the purchase of timesaving business machines, but only when business volume warrants the sizable investment in cash registers, adding machines, typewriters, bookkeeping machines, etc.

Keeping the accounts receivable ledger accurately posted and current is an important task. The ledger file should be so arranged that in a few seconds any current account can be located to advise a waiting customer of the balance owed. A bookkeeper who does not keep this part of a florist's records currently posted, who cannot locate charges or credits promptly and who makes errors in posting soon can cause considerable ill will. Customers who receive incorrect statements repeatedly will soon begin to buy their flowers at shops which are more systematic and accurate.

Smart florists watch these ledgers carefully, and many of them personally keep the accounts receivable records because they are so important. Every charge purchase means less capital immediately available for buying of merchandise to replace that sold on credit. Collections and charge sales must be kept in fairly even balance for smooth business operation. A good surplus in operating capital is the saving alternative when the charge sale balance becomes much larger than the collections.

COLLECTIONS

The florist frequently is remiss in his record keeping, simply because he permits the pressure of other work to prevent him and his employees from preparing and mailing monthly statements on time. Every flower shop should have a definite monthly date for closing of the accounts receivable ledger. Many florists select the twenty-fifth

as a practical date, after which purchases made will appear on the succeeding month's statement. The statement blanks should have imprinted upon them this information for the customer. That date will give the bookkeeper several days in which to prepare the statements for mailing on or before the first.

Statements received regularly on or before the first of each month are more likely to receive the debtor's preferred attention, and remittances will be made before their funds are depleted by payments on bills from other merchants.

The statement, if not typewritten, should be written neatly in a legible hand and should furnish sufficient information for the customer—the date of purchase, the article purchased, the consignee or recipient and the amount, including sales tax, if any. Many florists attach duplicate copies of charge slips to their monthly statements, which, in that case, consist of the briefest tabulations without explanation. This saves considerable time in preparing statements.

When duplicate order forms are used, a carbon copy may be mailed to the customer immediately as an invoice, as soon as the order covered by it is filled. Florists who follow the practice of sending invoices report good to excellent results. Other florists argue that it is duplicated effort and not worth the extra postage and stationery, because they have to send a statement the first of the month anyhow, whether or not there is more than one purchase during the month. Experiences of florists in different communities account for varied customer response to the mailing of invoices. The new customer and the one who buys flowers rarely are the ones most likely to pay their accounts on receipt of the invoice. There are, however, some large business firms which request invoices and pay their bills from them instead of from statements. The customers who open charge accounts generally plan and seem to prefer to pay all of their bills early each month.

Return self-addressed envelopes enclosed with statements are a convenience to the customer and today are accepted by merchants as good collection psychology and courtesy. The fact that almost every mail remittance is returned in that envelope is evidence of customer

appreciation. Some merchants go a step farther, using return envelopes with a postage permit requiring no stamp. They feel that the debtor will pay more promptly if he does not have to stamp the envelope himself. It is doubtful if the results are worth the 3 cent additional cost to the florist on each payment he receives by mail.

Advertising matter, in the form of blotters or stuffers offering suggestions to customers, should be included with statements whenever possible. Inserts promoting civic and charitable causes, such as the Red Cross, Community Chest, etc., enclosed with the florist's statements, create goodwill and label him as a businessman who is progressive and civic-minded.

Window envelopes should be used for mailing of statements, because they obviate the necessity of spending hours of time in addressing envelopes.

As the statements are mailed each month, the florist should record and date the total amount due him on accounts receivable. This amount he will compare with other months and years. He will also want to check this with the amounts received on account occasionally during the month. These amounts will tell him whether his collections are good or slow. He will watch the ratio between his charge purchases and payments on account. When the charge purchases exceed the payments by a large margin, he takes it as a danger signal and tightens the loopholes in his credit and collection policies, because this condition deprives him of too much working capital.

PAST DUE ACCOUNTS

Credit experts admonish businessmen to watch the great amounts of idle capital tied up in charge accounts, which prevent many of them from paying their bills on time. They emphasize that inability to take advantage of cash discounts on purchases may, in fact, be a greater loss than the potential profit gained from indiscriminate credit extension.

The customary monthly charge account is considered delinquent if it is not paid by the tenth of the month following receipt of statement. Many florists' statements have imprinted along the perforated

address stub "All accounts due and payable on or before the tenth of month following purchase." An effective line to follow is a factual statement indicating the firm is a member of a good local merchants' credit agency, naming, of course, that agency.

The florists' statements may be put at the bottom of a customer's stack of bills if the florist is considered a poor businessman or a good fellow who will not push the payment of the account. Membership in a credit agency helps to repress that feeling.

If a collection policy in the flower shop is to function well, it must be specific and apply to all alike. The same follow-up on slow accounts should be given to all accounts, including friends and so-called influential persons.

Friends generally are referred to as poor customers by florists. That should not be the case, and this condition exists only when the florist himself is at fault. If he treated his business transactions with friends as such, and not as favors and special concessions, he would be more respected and not slighted on collections by them.

Each day, week and month an account is delinquent, it decreases in value proportionately and becomes increasingly difficult to collect. Unless the florist or his credit manager stimulates activity for their payment, it will die of old age. The U. S. Department of Commerce states that an account deteriorates with age from \$1 current value in two months to 90 cents, in six months to 67 cents, in one year to 45 cents, in two years to 23 cents, in three years to 15 cents and in five years to one cent.

The cost of mailing additional statements, the loss of interest and use of the money as capital and other costs of collection soon can devour the net profit on the sale. That can happen in less than three months, when an account would have depreciated fifteen per cent in value. The reasons why a florist's credit and collection policy must function well are too obvious for argument.

Every florist or his credit manager should have a systematic follow-up on delinquent accounts. If an account is not paid by the time a second statement is mailed, that statement will list the unpaid balance as the first item on the new statement. If not paid when the

third statement is mailed, it should be noted as past-due on that statement and a "please" or personally written note requesting payment initialed by the florist added at the bottom. The use of rubber stamps or stickers is not nearly so effective as is a note from the florist himself. At this time additional charges should not be permitted on the account unless payment is made.

The ledger sheets or cards of these accounts should then be placed in a slow accounts file or earmarked in the ledger file so that they can be spotted easily by the credit manager. Then if the account is not paid by the 10th of that month, the credit manager should contact the debtor. He should state who he is and that he is verifying a balance listed as past-due to be sure that he has not made an error. This is flattering to the debtor and not too embarrassing, because it amounts to telling him that his paying ability was unquestioned in the mind of the florist. At all times the credit manager will be polite and avoid antagonizing a customer. Most often a customer will say that he was careless and had overlooked the account and will mail a check. Telephone follow-up is favored over collection letters, because it takes less time and gets better results. Every customer has a different temperament and reacts differently when called. The credit manager can sense these differences in a telephone conversation and secure action on the account, at the same time keeping the debtor as a customer for the shop with the likelihood of prompt future payments.

If the account then is not paid, a credit association notice should be sent, advising the customer of impending referral of the account for collection, unless the florist or credit manager believes from previous performance and conversation that the account will be paid without such assistance. Personalities and misfortunes of debtors may alter the decision. Suggested payments on an account may be a solution and save for the florist the regular collector's fee.

A florist should be strict in insisting that his customers keep their accounts paid up to date. If he permits their accounts to lag in the past-due file, they will go elsewhere for their flowers to avoid the embarrassment of meeting him. It should not be regretted if slow

paying customers do quit charging flowers at his shop. If accounts are not paid promptly, the florist cannot realize any profit on their accounts. If customers are advised that the florist expects their accounts to be paid promptly, he should follow through to see that they are paid.

Percentages of bad account losses vary in different flower shops because of many factors—location, prevailing economic conditions, transient clientele, inferior shop management and poor performance by the florist in administering his credit and collection policies. In 1945 the loss of florists on bad debts was estimated to be one-half of one per cent or \$5 per \$1000 sales—as compared with more than twice that amount in 1940 because of general business conditions' reflecting directly on collections. Shops which have a larger loss than that should improve their handling of credits and collections.

In the past fifteen years our own records show a bad debt loss of one-tenth of one per cent, or a \$1 loss per \$1,000 sales, which is considered good by credit men, particularly in view of the fact that we cannot recall any case in which we have been obliged to reject an application for credit. There are undoubtedly shops which show a smaller loss than that because of better local economic conditions and more efficient management.

A good credit manager is not the one who has no losses, but rather one who keeps them to a minimum commensurate with economic trends and type of clientele. A credit policy too stringent might eliminate borderline charge accounts, resulting in an actual loss of normally profitable business with a comparatively small margin of risk.

OTHER RECORDS

The payroll record in every flower shop should be accurate and detailed, showing social security numbers, names and addresses of employees, hours of work, wages and social security and income tax deductions. These are vitally necessary for reporting and paying various taxes, workmen's compensation and insurance.

Other records, listing all taxes, the dates they are due and the

amounts paid, should be kept by every florist. Folders should be provided for keeping receipts, copies of assessment blanks, work sheets used for their computation, etc.

The florist will also find it convenient to keep a file for bills covering his purchases each month. This record of his accounts payable is valuable for comparison with other years in ratio to the accounts receivable for the same months. Alphabetical files for paid invoices are necessary for checking on costs, sources and other information about purchases.

A file record of advertising programs and expenditures, together with ideas for future use, is advisable. Customer mailing lists may be checked against new accounts opened and sales records to test the worth of various promotions.

Florists who are members of telegraphic flower service organizations keep special records of that activity.

Separate bookkeeping records should be made when a greenhouse is operated in connection with a retail store. The growing operation is a separate function, and the flowers grown should be recorded as a wholesale purchase by the retail branch. When labor and other expenses incurred overlap in the shop and attached greenhouse, those costs should be apportioned to each activity.

Most florists keep separate records on special gift lines of merchandise they sell in addition to flowers. Greeting cards, perfume, lamps, china and other gifts are some items upon which detailed information should be kept to prove their adaptibility and worth as a sideline.

Files for cash register tapes, canceled checks, bank statements and cash records are necessary.

Any bookkeeper can work more efficiently if there are a planned system and a convenient place for all of his records. The florist with that kind of office management supporting him can be a better businessman, but only if he uses the information those records contain.

XXI * *Correspondence and Stationery*

IMPRESSION VALUE

Correspondence of any kind, whether it be a card, statement or letter, leaves with each person through whose hands it passes a lasting visual impression of the flower shop from which it originated. The value of that impression may be measured by the character of the message and the quality or suitability of the stationery itself in reflecting the discrimination of the florist.

The comment from a friend or customer that a letter sounds just like its writer or that the stationery suits the personality of the sender or the shop he represents is a real compliment. No ethical person wishes to leave a false impression with a friend or business acquaintance. He is desirous that his written words typify his intentions and character as truly as if they were spoken in person to the recipient of the correspondence. The stationery by its style of printing and other embellishment mirrors the person or shop in the same way in which clothes become the wearer or decorations symbolize the flower shop.

A personal greeting or an introduction may leave but a fleeting impression on the mind of a customer, his visit to the flower shop to place an order may be longer remembered, but the letter he received from that florist is most likely to make a lasting impression. If that letter is a good representative of the florist in its message and appearance, the florist has accomplished a result which advertising or personal calls might have failed to do.

STATIONERY

One of the first things every florist should do when beginning his business is to select the style of lettering for his shop signs and windows. This, along with the theme of his interior decoration or motif,

generally sets the pace and style for all printing he may use. The shop name on his delivery trucks, boxes, advertising and stationery should be identical. Whenever the name is seen it is immediately recognizable and identifies the shop by its individual style of lettering or color. Sometimes letters in regular type are used in such a clever formation, or plain block letters are silhouetted against a crest, design or cluster of flowers, that the effect is distinctive for its simplicity. A sketch or photo of the shop or greenhouse may be used on stationery to good advantage.

A glance at magazine or newspaper ads makes one aware of the innumerable possibilities for variation in the selection of lettering for the name of a flower shop. Familiarity with the type used on many nationally advertised products is of inestimable value in the sale of these products. The companies which distribute those articles would spend thousands of dollars rather than change the color or style of their lettering.

The florist who attaches importance to the symbols and printing to be used in his business will spend considerable time in making a selection. The artist can design lettering which will have appeal without being too bold, beauty without being too feminine, color without being too flamboyant and style without being too extreme. If the name is not a common name and has more than five letters, legible type should be chosen.

The color and texture of the paper along with the type selected should be representative of the flower shop for which they are designed. There are some exceptionally fine stationery firms which cater exclusively to florists. Their services should be engaged by florists who have any question pertaining to stationery supplies. A good printer, artist, engraver or stationer also can furnish helpful suggestions along this line and create for the florist an appropriate and typical name plate. Their advice should be sought and carefully considered. The stationery used by other florists and stores of all kinds might furnish other ideas and variations which would be adaptable.

The florist who has a casual friendly atmosphere in his shop, with knotty pine walls in a rustic style, might select a coarse, rough-

textured paper, with informal lettering. The shop which is formal and elegantly decorated would prefer fine parchment paper, with formal engraved lettering. The lady florist might well choose a pastel paper with graceful lettering and feminine decoration. The modernistic flower shop certainly would not use Old English script for its name plates. It is equally incongruous for a florist to have stationery decorated with tropical flowers and orchids unless he specializes in them and carries an ample stock of those flowers at all times.

When the florist has made his selection of paper, lettering and decoration, if any, for his stationery he must determine whether or not he wishes to add more than the name, address and the telephone number of his shop. Most florists use the emblem of the telegraphic service to which they belong. Others have slogans, such as "Say It With Flowers," "Quality is our Keynote," "The Extra touch that means so much," "Where your floral needs become creations," "Always a distinctive service in flowers," "When it's flowers—Say it with ours," or "We grow our own."

The flower shop has use for many different kinds of stationery items. The following list includes those most commonly used: Letterheads with matching envelopes, statement blanks with window envelopes, return envelopes, business cards, tag envelopes, labels and stickers, enclosure cards and folders, delivery receipts, door notices, order forms, blank checks and money receipts, acknowledgement blanks or cards for telegraph orders. All of these should be harmonious and bear the florist's distinctive name plate.

The florist, investing hundreds of dollars in supplies of this kind, should not be haphazard in placing his order for stationery. In the beginning he might consider this matter insignificant compared to other problems he faces, but as his business grows every detail down to the spacing of letters and words on the return envelope will take on added importance and value. If he uses good judgment at the start, he will not later be obliged to make costly changes in his name plates and signs.

The florist who has worked with his own stationery for years becomes so accustomed to it that he is oblivious to its defects. When-

ever a reorder is placed for stationery of any kind, he should give attention to possible improvements in design, wording and quality and seek the assistance of his printer in this regard. Suggestions from customers and employees of the shop often lead to definite improvements.

GREETING CARDS

In a number of flower shops racks of greeting cards occupy a conspicuous spot. Those shops report a brisk sale of fancy cards which create added sales. Some of them do a substantial business on greeting cards alone. It would seem to be a good sideline for the florist who is interested in that business.

Practically all florists furnish without charge to their customers small enclosure cards with printed messages suitable for different occasions for which flowers would be sent. These beautifully designed enclosure cards are supplied by florists' stationery firms. These are used by buyers who do not have a special personal message they wish to write on a plain card or their own engraved cards.

Because the tag envelope generally is thrown away, these cards may be printed with the florist's name on the reverse side, or may be marked with a small rubber stamp, or with a seal cut imprinting his name by indentation on the card. Because the cards are saved at least until a thank you note is written, the sending florist has this added opportunity of making his name familiar to the recipient of his flowers.

On telephone and telegraph orders, the florist has the duty of writing the card for his customer and should use every precaution to spell the name correctly and write it neatly and legibly. The misspelling of words or proper names is a reflection on the florist's intelligence and care and may be an affront to the customer who did not write his own card.

HANDLING THE MAIL

Dilatory handling of mail and tardy attendance at meetings are two criticisms made most often of florists by representatives of the indus-

try. The necessary self-discipline seems to be lacking, but a logical reason for its absence is not perceptible. A florist who is lax in opening and answering his mail is probably careless about other business matters also.

Opening the mail, sorting it and giving immediate attention to that which is urgent takes only a few minutes. If return envelopes with statements are used, it is easy to spot the mail holding payments on account. Regardless of the size of his business, the florist has no excuse for not giving mail the same prompt attention he would a customer or salesman calling at his shop.

Every piece of mail deserves a hearing, whether it be first-class or second-class matter. The supply house's circular or catalog, the wholesaler's weekly price list, the florist's acknowledgment of a telegraph order, the customer's payment, the mail order for flowers, the letter of appreciation for a handsome floral arrangement, the tax return, the statement covering a purchase, the request for a gift to charity, etc., should be opened, read and considered. Those requiring a reply should be answered within a day or two at least.

Keeping the desk cleared every day without accumulating unanswered or unopened mail is good business. Aside from giving punctual service, the work is easier if it is done in an efficient manner.

There are many ways to make new friends and customers without meeting them personally. One of the ways is by good letter writing. Every letter from the flower shop is a sales letter regardless of its content, and the effectiveness of the message will determine its results.

The thoughtful well written letter is a powerful instrument in creating good will. The letters of welcome to a newcomer, of appreciation for a new account, of thanks for orders and prompt payments, of sympathy in case of death, of best wishes in case of illness and congratulations on other occasions are builders of good customer relations. Any letter which makes a customer feel friendly toward the florist is worth the effort. A good collection letter can accomplish that purpose also.

Letters which cause ill-will should never be written. Unless they create goodwill, they are insipid and not worth their postage. Good

letter writing, like public speaking, requires practice and study. The ability to express ideas concisely, accurately and naturally on paper or verbally is an art and a real business asset.

Custom and business etiquette require certain formalities in letter writing which may be learned by observation or study of any text on the subject. Correct form, good choice of words, correct spelling, brevity, neatness and legibility are all desirable qualities in a business letter, but of far greater importance are those attributes which make the florist's letter express his thoughts as intended with natural sincerity. Stilted phrases and trite sayings are as ineffectual as coarse slang is offensive.

For his own records and future reference, the florist should retain in his files carbon copies of all outgoing correspondence, with the exception of routine acknowledgments. A separate follow-up file should be kept for all letters on which a reply is expected. The correspondence file on a particular subject would not be placed in the permanent file until the matter had been finally closed.

Florists are becoming more and more aware of the importance of every detail pertaining to their business. Certainly they cannot afford to miss the great opportunity which is theirs in making every bit of correspondence from their shops more influential in creating goodwill, securing new business, collecting accounts, encouraging others and expressing appreciation.

The mere writing of a good letter, the expression of thought on paper to a friend, acquaintance, business associate or stranger, is in itself a healthful outlet of feeling and a mental exercise which is of great benefit to the writer as well as a joyful morale builder and inspiration to the recipient. One of the indictments that can be made fairly against our hurried lives today is our failure to take the time to write the letters that we should. The old alibi about not having the time is pure farce. Where there is the will, there are the way and the time to do it.

XXII * *Advertising, Merchandising and Promotion*

THE FUNCTION OF ADVERTISING

Advertising is nothing more than bringing one's wants or one's business into public notice. The diversified means in which this may be done makes the subject a broad one. The aim and function of the advertising effort are all to the same end—namely, by publicity, promotion and merchandising, to bring flowers to the attention of the buying public. If the medium used by any florist accomplishes that end effectively for him, his program cannot be criticised even if it does not secure the same good results for another florist.

Advertising is the ally of salesmanship. Some forms of advertising are so direct that they might be classified as selling because they accomplish that end, with the exception of closing the transaction. For instance, a radio or newspaper ad might be so impelling that the buyer decided to place an order without hesitation; in other words, the sale was made by the ad, except for delivery of the merchandise. That is real sales advertising.

Much of the advertising done is of a more introductory nature, merely mentioning the name of the firm and nature of the business and location. Other ads mention flowers and quote prices. However, that alone is not sufficient unless it creates a demand for more flowers from that florist! Many of the ads used on the radio and in printed material are effective in publicizing flowers for all florists, but not particularly for the florist in whose name the particular ad appeared. In bringing any advertising message to the public, emphasis should be given to the reasons why flowers from a certain shop are more desirable, whether it be for price, service, quality or de-

sign. Too often the emphasis of advertising is placed on the item, rather than its use and value.

Every form of advertising should be gauged by the following requirements: Attracting attention, securing interest and creating confidence leading to a decision to act. Everyone who sells also advertises in one way or another. He may not use the common formal means of advertising, but his invitation to the buyer must be made in some manner—by window display, by a street sign, by a rack of merchandise on the street, or by his ringing of doorbells.

There is no convincing argument that can be made against the necessity for advertising in itself. Every business needs advertising of some kind and the differences of opinion arise only on the media. Questions which arise in the mind of every florist include the following: How much should be spent for advertising? Where should the advertising be done—newspaper, radio, window, etc? How often should ads appear? What message should the ads contain?

ADVERTISING COSTS

Every well managed business budgets a certain amount of its income for advertising. The amounts expended vary greatly in different types of businesses. The average florist's expenditure for advertising is estimated to be three per cent, based on previous surveys of the industry. That amount may seem low, but it compares favorably percentage-wise with expenditures made by department stores, markets, beauty salons, appliance shops and other retail stores. In reality, I believe that the florist's actual advertising percentage is considerably more than the estimated three per cent because the florist does much advertising of which he keeps no accurate record, such as gifts to benefits, flowers used in shop and window display, flowers sent to friends and customers, time spent away from his shop demonstrating flower uses, or meeting new friends and contacting customers at various social and business affairs, etc. All of those activities cost time and money and are a form of advertising for his business, which, if added to his formal advertising, would considerably increase his advertising cost. To present a true picture those activities should be

itemized as advertising expense. For that reason, I do not believe that the average florist's advertising budget is below par compared with most other businesses.

SELECTING THE MEDIUM

Florists have been heard to comment, "I can't afford to advertise." More accurately speaking, he should say "No florist can afford *not* to advertise." It is true that some forms of advertising, such as newspaper and radio, which have such a broad coverage, are prohibitive in cost to the neighborhood florist because their circulation coverage reaches so far beyond his potential clientele. He is paying for much coverage which is of no value to him. But there are other forms of advertising available at less cost which are adapted to his particular business and budget. The important decision to be made is *not how much* should be *spent*, but *how* it should be *invested* to secure the greatest return.

The best medium of advertising is, and always will be, the satisfied customer. What the flower buyer says about the shop from which he makes his purchase means more to all of his friends and acquaintances than do the things that the florist says about his own service and flowers. Customer satisfaction, followed by words of commendation and praise of the florist, means more than volumes of printed advertising material. There is not another commodity that sells itself on sight as readily as flowers. Each bloom wherever and whenever seen is its own ad and has as much appeal as food to the hungry person.

With a commodity which in itself is so desirable, it is up to each florist to make that commodity even more appealing when it comes from *his* shop. He might do that by beautiful packaging, unusual arranging and exceptional service. He might publicize his shop by beautiful decorations, fine window display, uniformed deliverymen and handsome delivery cars. Or he might use direct mail, radio advertising, newspapers or neighborhood papers, billboards, car ads, etc. Some florists might disregard most of these media and concentrate

on personal contacts, securing their clientele through club memberships, attendance at civic meetings and church or lodge groups.

WIDE CHOICE

The location of the flower shop, its display, lighting and decoration may be of great advertising value. The cost of that location through increased rent might justify that florist's reduced budget on other advertising channels. By providing superior service, workmanship, attractive front displays and fine flowers, he could continue to increase his business volume without the aid of commonly recognized advertising media. Keeping his customers satisfied by maintaining the highest ethical standards for value and service is the surest way to steady growth for any flower shop. The word-of-mouth advertising furnished by customers and their friends who receive flowers from the florist furnishes a steady grapevine type of growth which is healthy and certain.

To speed up and increase this normal growth the florist has his choice of several outside advertising media, such as newspapers and neighborhood bulletins, programs and society magazines, radio and television, direct mail, bill boards and transit car ads, telephone directories, flower shows, flower promotions in conjunction with other stores, calendars, pencils and other souvenirs and cooperative advertising.

The advertising media chosen by any florist will hinge directly upon the audience he wishes to reach. If he is interested primarily in selling his own customers more flowers he should use direct mail or insert messages in his statements. If he is interested in developing industrial accounts, he might advertise in the chamber of commerce publications and various trade papers in his community, or he might work from a mailing list furnished by the chamber of commerce. Should it seem advisable to reach the young people in his community, the school publications and college weeklies and annuals would be a logical choice.

The housewife places the orders for many flowers sent to family

friends for various occasions. Reaching her with the advertising message may be done in neighborhood papers, the women's page in the newspaper, or social publications and club bulletins. To contact newcomers in the community, direct mail or welcoming hostess services may be used. The latter are available in many localities, and the new residents are introduced to various shops and services through the personal call made by the hostess.

The florist in an industrial city might use trade union papers and various craft bulletins to reach the workingman. Every florist knows his business cannot be well rounded without orders from people in all walks of life. The shop specializing in elaborate decorations for social functions at clubs and hotels might not be interested in this media, but most florists doing a general business will welcome and cultivate every source for flower orders to build a steady, thriving business.

In larger cities, the various professions are a source of a considerable volume of business for the flower shop. The legal, medical, teaching, ministerial, dental and other professional publications are excellent for reaching this particular audience. Examples and avenues for advertising directed to a selected group or a general audience are innumerable. Some florists place emphasis only on advertising directed to selected groups, while others use advertising addressed to the general public.

The *newspaper* has many advantages. The message may be accurately timed to the occasion, and newspaper service is flexible, permitting last-minute changes of copy. Space for display ads may be selected, such as news, amusement, sports or fashion sections. Want ad columns are often used, and the preferred spaces are adjacent to the classified funeral notices. Several small spot display ads scattered in various sections of the paper may have more punch and draw better results than one large ad. In spite of the coverage of newspapers far beyond the florist's trade area, many shops prefer this medium because of immediate results it obtains.

Billboards are used because, unlike the newspaper, their messages are seen over and over by passers-by. They are not used generally

by individual florists because an effective distribution of several well located billboards is necessary and this requires a substantial advertising budget. The billboard copy must be brief and the art work eye-catching.

Roadside signs and posters may be used on a smaller budget, but their locations and messages should be selected with the same care as those of billboards. In their favor, it can also be said that the florist's name is kept before the passing public night and day.

Theater programs for concerts, plays or athletic events are sometimes used by florists. The space taken often does a poor job of advertising, but the consideration and support given the program or civic event creates good-will for the florist on behalf of the sponsoring group.

Car-card advertising in busses, street cars, subways and suburban trains should also be considered. The rates are not excessive, and the florist may choose certain lines and localize his message to certain traffic. If that ad is good, it is likely to be read by passengers who have the time to absorb it when their minds are not otherwise occupied.

Radio is an advertising medium being used effectively by a few florists. These ads are most often spot announcements. Desirable spots are those just preceding or following the newscasts, weather forecasts or other programs with a high listener rating. It takes only fifteen seconds to remind a listener to send flowers for a birthday, anniversary or to a sick friend.

Direct mail is widely used by florists, particularly in the form of statement enclosures of blotters, calendars and other leaflets to their customers. Such mailing lists could well be enlarged to include former customers and prospective new customers. Careful control and constant revision of mailing lists are as important as the text of the message sent by direct mail. There are many sources which may be contacted for select mailing lists covering certain areas, industries, professions and social groups. Letters outlining the service, describing floral arrangements and quoting prices are most likely to bring immediate returns.

Television appears to have a bright future for florists' advertising. In the current black and white version extreme care has to be taken in the selection of flower colors that will transmit effectively, and many florists are hopefully awaiting full-color television as an important means of visual selling of a product that sells best when seen.

Motion picture screen ads are being used by florists in smaller neighborhood theaters.

Telephone directory display ads and classified listings are popular, and many florists select these as their first choice of all printed advertising. The advantages are self evident.

A survey of the sources of new business coming into any flower shop will give the florist a clue as to the adequacy of his advertising program and the audience he is addressing. In many cases where results do not seem to warrant the expenditures made, the fault may not be with the media chosen or the audience addressed in that advertising. Most often the fault lies in the wording of the message.

ADVERTISING COPY AND LAYOUT

Too much money is spent every year by florists on advertising that includes only the name, address and telephone number of the flower shop. It has been stated over and over again that it is important to keep a shop name before the public, but in my opinion it takes more than putting the name into print to do that job effectively. Furthermore, the additional copy in most ads is so general that it really says nothing that cannot be applied to any shop. For instance, "For Christmas, plants and cut flowers" or "Send flowers to Mother from—," and many other messages as general do not make advertising copy that sells flowers for the shop spending money for the ad. Certainly, they suggest flowers and mention his name, but in most cases that only reminds the reader to call his own florist.

Writing good advertising copy is an art. The appealing phrases and clever wording in copy used by many firms are given long study and are often written by advertising experts. The florist should

always work closely with his advertising counselor to be sure that the intent and feeling of the copy fit his business and ideas. Large firms spend thousands of dollars annually with advertising agencies which place their ads and write the copy. The average florist cannot and does not generally have a budget which warrants that procedure, but his study of the methods used by prosperous firms will give him a lead as to the kind of copy and layout to use in effective printed advertising.

Personal observation of the printed newspaper advertising by florists in many cities leads me to believe that in most cases the florist who, in the eyes of other florists, is "cut-rate" or "unethical," does the most effective advertising for his shop for the amount invested. In most cases, he is operating on a low-price policy, and he tells the public about it in a specific way, with good results. He is not afraid to tell the readers what he has to sell and for how much. For that reason, he does a volume business to the chagrin of other florists, who are not justified in calling him unethical unless he advertises dishonestly or misrepresents his merchandise. This he cannot do without being investigated by the Better Business Bureau, upon the complaint of the public or other florists. Every florist has a right to sell his merchandise at any price he wishes, even if that price is below cost. If any florist exercising that prerogative can do a good business and make money at the same time, the best thing for other florists to do is to follow in his footsteps.

We are all inclined to spend too much time watching our fellow florists' activities and studying their prices. Instead, we should be using that energy wasted in worry and depreciation to study ways to better advertise and promote our own businesses.

In planning advertising programs, florists, with a few exceptions, fall into one pattern. Their ads are of the same type and carry the same general copy. Instead, the ads should be individual, reflecting the shops in style and message. A good ad must have something to say to be read; if it features roses, it should say how they might be used and for how much they are selling. A brief description of un-

usual flowers and their keeping qualities and uses, aside from giving information to the public, does a selling job for the advertising florist if he is not afraid to tell about his service and prices.

A printed ad does not have to be large or of intricate design in its layout to attract attention. Generally speaking, a simple design with a briefly worded message is most effective. Printed ads should appear often and regularly, with varying messages. Even if the space used is small, it will prove to be much more profitable for the florist than a few large ads printed occasionally. The steady appeal made with the consistent regularity of water dripping on a stone will have far greater results than will the occasional sporadic big splash. Advertising counselors will vouch for the truth of that statement.

An editorial in *The Florists Review* of March 3, 1949, entitled "Consumer Advertising," is worth repetition:

Advertising men are critical of much of the consumer advertising done by florists. Good arguments accompany their criticism. The chief fault found by the experts might be summed up as follows: Too much emphasis on what 'we' have to sell, rather than what 'you' can do with what we have to sell.

For example, a florist may have some fine roses of which he is justifiably proud,—so he tells or shows the public by word or picture. The public may agree, but still is not informed what to do about them. The pitch advocated by the advertising fraternity is to tell or show the customer what these same roses will do for the dining room table or the fireplace mantel, or how they will cheer the convalescent in the sickroom. In other words the approach is through more enjoyable living because of the flowers—or customer satisfaction. The approach emphasizes the service and the use of the product and not the product itself.

With the consumer advertising that is coming up for Easter, florists might well ask themselves if "orchids, gardenias or carnations for Easter" will have the same appeal to their customers as suggesting that they will be at the head of the Easter parade when their new Easter outfits have that appropriate and essential touch—a beautiful spring corsage of fresh orchids, gardenias or carnations. Or perhaps advertising a potted Easter lily at so many dollars is sufficient, but the argument may sound more convincing to suggest that it will be a real Easter morning in your own living room with the finest of all Easter symbols—a living Easter lily plant in full bloom.

Florists are no different from other businessmen in that they live so close to their own products that the merchandise becomes the number one item in their thinking. That is why so many of the larger businesses have found it profitable to bring in specialists in advertising, who probably know virtually nothing about the business itself, but are conversant with the customer reaction and know how to approach the customer most effectively.

It is possible for the florist to advertise his name and business effectively without mentioning flowers in the main copy of his ad. He may use an uplifting quotation from the classics or a motto or give the major part of his space to promoting a civic project or charity, such as the Red Cross, Community Chest, etc. Ads of that type will receive comment and appreciative commendation and will be valuable because of the good will created thereby.

The florist must always remember that his advertising should at all times be adapted to the medium selected, the audience, his business aims, his budget, and the copy or message. This would apply whether that advertising is printed, verbal, visual or a combination of all.

WHEN TO ADVERTISE

The great majority of florists concentrate their advertising on greatly increased space before holidays, and some advertise *only* at Easter time, Christmas and Mother's Day. It is their policy to advertise when sales are easy to get. On those days all shops are hardpressed to fill the orders they book; this, combined with increased prices and necessarily poor service, does not make this a desirable time to solicit new business. New customers, visiting a shop for the first time at a holiday are not inclined to return, because they never understand the increased market prices and exceptional conditions.

In my opinion, the propitious time to advertise flowers is during the dull, in-between seasons, when more business can be handled well with the regular shop staff and when more flowers of better quality are available at normal prices. Persons responding to advertising then are more likely to be satisfied and become regular customers of the florist.

If the florist uses daily or weekly space for printed advertising, it would be advisable to use increased space not at holiday times, but on other days when his ad will not have the competition of all other florists and merchants using sizable space to bid for the consumers' gift dollars. The customers who have been gained in off seasons will order flowers at holidays. I do not mean to infer that the florist should not do any newspaper or other flower advertising at holiday time. Such a policy might end disastrously for the florist when merchants of competitive lines through their lavish advertising could conceivably wean a great amount of business from florists and gradually create a public habit of giving other gifts instead of flowers.

The time to advertise is continuously and consistently, adopting a program and hammering steadily at its aims to secure more and larger flower orders every day, week, month and year. That applies to every advertising medium.

COOPERATIVE ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION

The finest and most profitable promotion, education or advertising in which any florist can participate is cooperative. This is advertising done through the combined efforts of a group of florists. The fine results obtained by several florists' groups organized solely for this purpose are undeniable. These are organizations often referred to as allied in which the participating florists in a district or city contribute funds in proportion to the amount of their business. The sizable funds accumulated are controlled by an elected group or executive committee, which places the advertising and plans the program. Through this method at little cost to any individual florist are obtainable excellent results, which benefit every florist in the district. These organizations use a number of media, such as newspaper, radio, billboards, cards, flower shows, etc., to publicize flowers and educate the public on their use and value.

Full cooperation of florists in these endeavors gives stronger impetus to flower sales than the individual programs of the various shops. Allied advertising is the one type of city newspaper advertising

which benefits every florist, because the budget is sufficient to afford good space and give complete coverage. Advertising dollars spent in this cooperative effort will do immeasurably more for the florist than the same amount could do if spent individually.

The Florist's Telegraph Delivery Association and the Society of American Florists are other florists' organizations which have done much in nation-wide advertising and publicity for the benefit of florists everywhere. The worthy programs of these organizations will be discussed more fully in later chapters.

MERCHANDISING

The term, "merchandising" is used in everyday conversation with a number of connotative meanings. In reality, the word means simply selling for profit, and everything pertaining to salesmanship would apply to merchandising. The idea that it means a specialized type of salesmanship, or selling on a price policy as opposed to a service policy, has come about through common usage.

Every idea and plan used by the florist to sell more and better flowers at the lowest price possible, with a fair profit, constitute merchandising. The ideas and methods he may use are innumerable. They include window displays; priced merchandise; cash-and-carry items at reduced prices; sample arrangements on display; clever designing; publicity; combination sales of flowers and accessory gift items; featuring leader items to secure more store traffic; attractive packaging; exceptional delivery service by uniformed drivers; neat and adequate delivery cars; courteous, intelligent and efficient sales personnel; better telephone technique, etc.

The things done by a florist to make more and more customers select his shop in preference to others are the merchandising methods best suited to his business. These same ideas might be unique and not at all adaptable or practical for use in other flower shops.

PROMOTION

The reason business continues to increase in some shops and not in others often hinges on their merchandising tactics. It might be be-

cause of better service and designing, lower prices or better quality, or it might be a combination of many things, including well planned advertising and courteous treatment. Or it might simply be because the proprietors of those shops had the right kind of characters and applied the high ethical standards to all phases of their businesses. The success stories of all prominent businessmen, past and present, indicate that the driving force back of the leadership they gained in their professions stems from their faith in God and man. Their religions are not practiced in churches alone, but in their everyday activities. Fair dealing and good business ethics is nothing more than that. The man who drives a hard bargain, who cheats a little, who chisels when he can, is not a good merchandiser of flowers or anything else.

It has been said over and over that the flower industry must promote, through education of the public, the greater use of flowers, in order to reach its just position in the nations economic picture. Florists' organizations are aiming their programs definitely to that end, but most individual florists are not doing their share in backing up these programs, financially or otherwise. Through cooperation in planning their advertising, display and sales programs they could do much to educate the public to use more flowers. More knowledge about flowers leads to greater appreciation. More suggested uses of flowers leads to more buying. Flowers should become an everyday necessity, instead of a special occasion purchase.

There are a great many avenues the individual florist can follow in bringing this ideal nearer to reality, in addition to his support of florists' organizations formed for that purpose. It would be impossible to enumerate all of the ideas that have been or can be used to promote more interest in flowers. The following paragraphs from an editorial in the August 14, 1948 issue of "Florists Exchange and Horticulture Trade World" expresses realistically the value of promotion through education:

Selling flowers by "education" is far more advantageous than is selling by "habit," because the work of education can be turned on and off as

required; it can also be directed to certain individuals and times as the florist feels the need. Contrast this progressive method to the present sluggish system used by florists of servicing orders for weddings and funerals which are obtained by sitting behind the refrigerator awaiting the arrival of a customer with such an order.

There is hardly a person in any walk of life who does not like and appreciate flowers—a fact which makes the work of educating them to use flowers far easier than many other industries would find it to sell their product. The crux of the matter is that other industries *do* work at the job of selling their product; it is up to every member of the horticultural industry to use every available method to “educate” the public to purchase flowers for many purposes other than funerals and weddings.

Future profits—in fact, the future of the florist business itself—depends upon the amount of effort given to the idea of “selling” flowers.

The best way to teach behavior of any kind is by setting a good example. How many florists, men and women, wear corsages and boutonnieres as a matter of course? If they do not think enough of their own product to display it personally, how can they expect to educate the public to do so? The most lavish use of flowers for personal adornment is seen at the florists’ own social functions. At other social functions, including those of other business groups, the florist and his family fail to wear flowers when they really would do the most good. A florist’s wife should be a walking ad for him, illustrating to other women who see her the proper flowers for her costume and the occasion and the correct way to wear them. The same reasoning applies to the use of flowers in florists’ homes and the sending of flowers as gifts.

Remembering businessmen on their birthdays or other occasions with a complimentary boutonniere will encourage the more widespread wearing of flowers by men.

PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS

Displaying appropriate flower arrangements in cooperation with other merchants in dress shops, china and silver departments, jewelry stores, theaters and restaurants is a form of promotion that should

be used. Sometimes the florist can afford to do this without charge, because of the benefit his shop derives through the association of his name on a card accompanying a correct flower arrangement.

Flower shows, because of their beauty and the interest and curiosity they create, attract a large general public attendance. They offer the florists an opportunity to educate further the public on flower styles and uses in a practical way. The shows may be financially self-supporting, and the cooperating florists help themselves and the public in such promotional efforts.

Flower arrangements in lobbies, windows and stores, furnished by the florist or sold by him, are good promotions as long as the flowers are in good condition. The florist should always be alert and see that wilted flowers are removed from displays, or the good done the first few days will be undone the following days.

Much has been accomplished and can still be done by individual florists in cooperation with funeral homes and hospitals in the handling of flowers. Group sponsorship of nurses' scholarships in hospitals has created much good will.

Demonstrations, talks and flower displays before luncheon clubs, social and business meetings on the proper use and arrangement of flowers are a good educational activity. In many instances the florists best equipped and staffed to do this type of promotion are indifferent to these invitations, because they do not feel the results are worth the cost and effort involved. Invitations of this kind are likely to be overdone, and they place a burden on florists available for these programs. In many cases clubs scramble to secure these programs because they are free. To curb this trend, some florists set a fee to cover at least the cost of flowers used.

PRIZES AND GIFTS

Florists are popular sources for draw prizes and gifts to every club giving benefit parties. The privilege has been abused, and the generosity of the florist is taken for granted. Because the idea has been so overworked in many communities, florists have justifiably formed

a policy against furnishing prizes for benefits. The promotion value is lost, with a mere name mention among scores of others.

Sweetest day, Fathers' day, National Flower week, National Baby week are a few of the occasions which are being promoted on a large scale by florists' organizations. Telegraphing flowers here and abroad is being advertised extensively. The cooperation of florists in promoting these programs is vital to the furtherance of the wider use of flowers.

More attention to children and teen-agers in flower shops will mean greater flower sales. Cereal companies, soft drink manufacturers and candy firms spend millions of dollars annually in promotion of their products through radio programs for children, coupons, prizes, etc. Father still has a rein on the purse strings, but his children with a light tug can tilt the spending their way. Every courtesy shown and each bit of interest created in the minds of children by the florist may well prove to be his best promotion. The children of today are our regular customers of tomorrow. "Send flowers to mother on your birthday" is a slogan being used to advantage.

Florists, through their use of names of varieties in selling flowers, such as Joanna Hill or Better Times roses, Beacon gladioli, Pelargonium carnations, Canhamiana orchids, etc., have created additional interest on the part of their customers. Education of the public on flower names and varieties leads to more conversation about flowers. It gives the customer more assurance in placing orders and makes him feel more at home with flowers, because he knows more about them.

Appearance of food, attractiveness of the table and atmosphere of the home are stressed by dietitians, educators and psychologists. Flowers may become part of this promotion, if florists use the idea in their selling and advertising. There is no reason why funeral flowers should account for most of the sales volume, if florists, individually and cooperatively, promote flower sales for everyday use and home decoration. A well organized program of education of that kind could, in a few years, place flowers for home use well up in

the sales volume, as compared to flowers for funerals and gifts for various occasions.

REMINDER SERVICE

Reminder service has had excellent results in many flower shops. Through various means the florist builds up a date file, in which are recorded anniversary, birthday and other special dates for a family. He agrees, at no obligation to remind his customer by card or telephone a few days prior to the date he may wish flowers delivered. This file must be accurate and up-to-date. Once started, the florist is obliged to continue the service. Negligent handling of this detail would boomerang, with a loss of confidence in the florist's dependability. A few florists furnish the reminder service only to customers who request it and make no effort or suggestion to develop the idea, because their policy is strictly opposed to direct solicitation of any kind.

As a result of promotion in various communities, great quantities of flowers are used by industries to develop customer goodwill and closer employee-management relationship. Many industrial accounts, however, are still untouched. Florists, through the use of advertising, direct mail and personal contact, have the opportunity of promoting a greatly increased volume of flower sales to commercial accounts.

Editors, columnists and commentators are always on the alert for interesting facts about people and business. Flowers and their cultivation have a natural appeal and have been the basis for many interesting articles and news items. The florists connected with these stories have figured prominently in the news and have, in most instances, profited from the publicity. A news item referring to the work or experiences of a florist is not an incident too rare to deserve consideration.

The florist whose business bears his name or whose name is closely associated with his business, receives publicity of the kind he creates every time his name is mentioned in conversation or in print. It may be about the new decoration in his shop or window, the designer

recently added to his staff, the unusual flowers furnished for a party or a new color in a flower developed by him. The story might pertain to his activities on a civic project or charity, a talk he gave before a trade group or service club or his ideas on the use and arrangement of flowers in the home. The publicity item might be in the society column, telling about a social affair at his home or about a vacation with his family. All of those things are publicity and are of value to any merchant.

Any self-respecting person will refrain from carrying a good thing too far, and the florist should exercise discretion in seeking publicity. No one admires the person who is forever seeking the limelight. The public is quick to see through sham and ostentation, and members of the trade are never in sympathy with the florist who is overanxious to see his name in print or to take a bow.

Again, it is safe to strike a happy medium. Every florist has ideas and experiences which are noteworthy. He should not hesitate to put those items into reputable hands for publication. Most often the suggestion for publicity will come from his friends and customers. That is the ideal situation, but should not in every case prevent his personal instigation for publicity.

For instance, election to office in a national trade organization, attendance at conventions or other recognition from the florists' industry is local news. Items such as these should be presented to local city news editors, in brief, legible form. They are much more likely to be published if handled in such a businesslike manner, instead of in the form of a telephone call to a busy editor.

Photographs of unusual flower arrangements and table decorations, with descriptive articles, are sometimes welcomed by local editors. Whether they are used with a credit line to the florist or not, they make good flower publicity of the kind that benefits the entire industry. The florist who unselfishly presents his ideas to the trade and the public with sincere motives will always receive the most generous publicity and be most respected by editor and the public.

Humility and subordination of self to his ideas and service to the

public are personality traits well worth developing. The resultant reaction of customers and acquaintances of the florist practicing those traits will create for him the right kind of publicity. His experiences and ideas then will be sought for publicity without aggression on his part.

XXIII * *Complaints*

Complaints, criticisms and suggestions from customers and friends about flowers and services of the florist should be welcomed by every florist. They furnish him an opportunity and challenge. Accepting or rejecting this responsibility of his business indicates the ratio of his success or failure.

Like every other merchant and professional man, the florist wishes to please his customers—to satisfy them completely on every order. Every business man knows that it is impossible to please all of the people all of the time, but that fact spurs every progressive merchant to reduce to a minimum the number of dissatisfied customers. The whims, idiosyncracies and ideas of people about what they expect from their florist are as numerous as their personalities and their likes or dislikes.

WHY CUSTOMERS COMPLAIN

The motives which cause people to complain about the way their flower orders are handled and filled are most valuable to the florist. A great number of them report to him their own criticisms and those of their acquaintances, because they are interested in him and his business and are trying sincerely to help him maintain a good reputation. They are not interested primarily in their own gain nor in a financial adjustment of the purchase price; if they are, they are subtle enough to know that such an approach to the florist is probably the best way of securing an adjustment.

Other customers complain because they honestly believe they did not receive a fair deal. They know that the fair thing to do is to tell the person at fault, giving him a chance to correct the error, rather than to tell their friends and injure his reputation unfairly.

Some persons are chronic complainers, not only about flowers but

about everything from the weather to the color of their coffee. Every community has a few of these individuals, who help take a little bit of joy out of life, but, with diplomacy and tactful handling, their whining calls definitely can be curtailed by the florist who applies psychology to the situation and develops them into reasonable repeat customers.

The things about which flower buyers complain might be named as follows, according to the frequency of their occurrence after delivery of the order: 1. Inferior quality or poor keeping characteristics. 2. Late deliveries. 3. Substitutions. 4. Misrepresentation. There are, however, other things about which customers might complain, such as high prices of his flowers compared to those of other florists and poor sales personnel, who drive away business because of ignorance, personality, or high pressure tactics. These complaints, however, do not often reach the ears of the florist. They are problems arising primarily from poor salesmanship or store management and not complaints pertaining to flowers and the service following the taking of an order.

Most of the complaints pertaining to inferior quality of flowers or plants occur because of a customer's ignorance or misunderstanding concerning their care and normal life. Much of this can be averted by better salesmanship and honesty in representing the keeping quality of various flowers and plants, with advice on their proper care at the time a sale is made. If the flowers are delivered to someone other than the buyer, instructions for their care should accompany the flowers. There are times, however, when flowers appear to be in perfect condition on delivery, but within a short time show defects which could not have been anticipated.

When complaints arise because of late delivery or substitution, the florist can do nothing but admit his error and make the proper adjustment. There might be reasons for both of these complaints, but the fault lies with the florist in promising a certain delivery time or specific flowers. If there is ever any doubt about filling an advance order with certain flowers, the florist should protect himself with an explanation that a substitution may be necessary. There seems to be

scant ground for a salesman to promise one thing and deliver another, without advance permission from the customer.

Most complaints of misrepresentation come about through poor salesmanship. For instance, when a customer specifies a nice arrangement, there may be great variance in the minds of the salesperson and the customer about what is nice. The customer might ask how much it would cost to make a presentable arrangement for the occasion. Definite information should be given on every order as to the type of arrangement which will be sent unless the buyer is a regular customer familiar with the work of the florist. In other words, there should be complete meeting of minds on the flowers to be sent, the price and the time of delivery. Carelessness on these details leads to most of the complaints and misunderstandings.

MEETING THE COMPLAINT

Regardless of the efforts expended by the florist to keep mistakes at a minimum and his determination to give full value at a fair price, there still will be complaints. The customer is not always right, but the florist who has the most success in adjusting complaints and satisfying his customers is the one who agrees with them. He is smart enough to give his customer benefit of the doubt. He knows that it does not pay to argue. An attitude of friendliness, expressing appreciation for the thoughtfulness of the customer in telling him of the dissatisfaction and disappointment, will go far in putting his caller in a sympathetic frame of mind. Putting himself in the shoes of his customer from the start will lead to continued patronage and good will. Most customers feel they have a justified complaint, or they would not mention it. They should be accorded courteous treatment, based on the assumed premise that they are right.

Every florist should face his complaining customers squarely and frankly by admitting his mistakes and not by passing the buck to an employee. If more florists knew the real value of handling complaints diplomatically, they would not lose customers to other florists and competitive gift merchants.

The florist should be grateful for every criticism and should let his

customers know that his business is built solely on their satisfaction. The only way to do that is to welcome their frank expressions of criticism. Instead of making them feel unfair or unreasonable by being harsh and argumentative, the florist should tell them that they are doing him a favor by making the criticism, because it keeps him and his staff on their toes. A show of willingness to do whatever the customer considers fair under the circumstances and an explanation of his problems will pay dividends in the end.

THE SETTLEMENT OR ADJUSTMENT

A fair settlement or adjustment of complaints cannot come about through a Milquetoast attitude on the part of the florist, of giving in to every whim of a customer without reason. Nor can it be done by being dictatorial nor dogmatic. Neither extreme is business-like nor likely to instill confidence and respect on the part of the customer. On the other hand, the man who makes impartial decisions based on reason after a full consideration of the facts is respected.

If a complaint is received on wilted flowers twenty-four hours or less after delivery, the florist should be solicitous in seeking a reason for poor quality. Rather than immediately admitting error, he should express his regret and surprise and ask how they were cared for, whether the stems had been trimmed before arranging by the customer and whether they were frozen or overheated. If the order was an arrangement, he should inquire if water had been added in accordance with the instructions and whether or not it was placed in a drafty or overheated room. In making a replacement of the flowers, it is only fair to request a return of the unsatisfactory flowers when the new ones are delivered, so that they might be examined to ascertain the cause for complaint.

In case the order was delivered to a third party and the buyer was registering the complaint, the same procedure could be followed, except that the florist would also make an explanation to the party who received the flowers. This might be done by a note accompanying the replacement.

Florists receive unjustified complaints also. In some cases a com-

plaint with a request for an entire replacement is made when only one or two flowers have wilted. An inspection of the original bouquet or a request for an exchange often put a stop to repeated unjustified complaints.

There are cases when an inspection cannot be made, as in the case of funeral flowers after a service has been held, or when a corsage has fallen apart when it was worn. In those cases, the report of the customer should be considered sympathetically, and an adjustment in price might be made or extra value given on the next order to compensate for unforeseen poor quality. Generally, the latter will suffice, if the situation is handled with tact. On complaints pertaining to the quality of flowers for funerals, the florist always should explain that he tries to use extreme caution in filling those orders, because they mean so much and because a mistake cannot generally be rectified in time. In those cases, a florist may concede that a cancellation of the purchase price does not begin to compensate for a customer's embarrassment or disappointment. His sincerity when apologizing for the error goes a long way with a reasonable customer.

Most of the complaints arising on corsage flowers are caused by errors made at the design table or by a lack of information on the part of the wearer on how to handle the flowers. A corsage or bouquet must be designed to take more abuse than any other type of arrangement. The public does not realize that a chrysanthemum which is bumped will shatter; when uninformed, the natural conclusion is that the blossom was inferior. A tuberous begonia or camellia when improperly wired cannot withstand much handling without breaking. Education of the public and information given the buyer at the time of sale can obviate many of the complaints. The purchaser should always be told of the fragility of the flowers and their proper care.

There are cases in which a florist should make a replacement or refund the purchase price, even though he was not at fault. It is often the easiest and most profitable way out of a situation. Standing his ground, without convincing the customer that he is right, often leads to the loss of an account and spreads rumors that the florist

is unreliable. It is a problem which every florist must decide for himself. Above all, he should never hide behind flimsy excuses when faced with a complaint.

DEFINITE POLICIES

Every florist should outline definite policies concerning the handling of complaints. First among them should be the policy that must be understood by all personnel. *No complaint should ever go unanswered.* This should apply even though the criticism was minor and even though it was made a month after delivery of the flowers or payment of the account. Any customer who has a criticism to offer about flowers or service deserves the courtesy of a reply or explanation.

Another good policy for every florist is as follows: *Every complaint should be referred to the shop proprietor or manager for handling.* This action immediately informs the customer that his criticism is considered important and of vital interest to the shop.

Some florists have established the policy of an unconditional guarantee on every flower order delivered. Such a policy, without qualifications, might lead to considerable abuse, although those florists believe that the additional orders received on the basis of that policy far offset the loss on unjustified complaints.

Another rule in some shops to inform flower buyers that a complaint made later than forty-eight hours after delivery of the order cannot be considered nor adjusted, because it does not give the florist an opportunity to make an inspection of the unsatisfactory order. In cases when the criticism cannot be made sooner, exceptions are made, as in the case of flowers sent by telegraph to distant points, or when flowers were delivered to a third party and the defect was not reported to the buyers in time.

Some florists make it their policy not to guarantee plants because of the great number of factors involved. A few days without water, in drafts, in improper light, or with too much water, etc., can ruin them. In every case, those florists take precaution to inform their customers

on the proper care, and they are extremely careful in selecting and inspecting the plants before delivery.

Dissatisfaction sometimes arises from the florist's refusal to accept the return of containers sent as gifts after a considerable period of time has elapsed. A definite shop policy should be understood by sales personnel and customers alike pertaining to *merchandise taken out on approval* and the length of time after which gift items may not be returned for *exchange or credit*. Publicizing definite rules in keeping with the general practices of merchants' associations in the community is recommended.

Some complaints are not made until the customer receives the statement on the first of the month. If the complaint is about anything except a misunderstanding of the price charged, it is an indication that the fault was either forgotten or was not serious enough to mention before the request for payment was made. Some persons are unscrupulous in making claims to ease the strain on their purse strings. Regardless of the motive, they too deserve courteous consideration and an explanation of the shop's policy in adjusting complaints.

Late deliveries, a common criticism of many florists, are caused by laxity in living up to promises. They are a serious reflection on the reliability of the florist and caused by nothing more than pure carelessness or the mismanagement of the sales, designing and delivery services of the shop. When a promise is made, it must be kept, and every circumstance which might prove to be an obstacle must be considered. For building good will, *every shop must have a policy of keeping its word*—living up to promises given customers and tradesmen alike.

Necessarily, some of these policies must be flexible. The florist must use discretion in making all adjustments. Previous experience with the customer's personality and other factors will color his thinking and decisions. However, it is paramount to adhere to a firm policy of *one price and equal service to all customers*. The same fair treatment, as much as is humanly possible, must be accorded to every complaint, regardless of size of the order, or the customer's social and financial standing.

COMBATING LOSS OF CUSTOMERS

Recurring complaints and unsatisfactory adjustments result in the loss of patronage. The battleground of every florist lies in keeping his customers in line and satisfied, at the same time making his work and shop attractive to new customers. Nothing hurts a conscientious florist more than the knowledge that he cannot keep his customers. However, in spite of all he does to operate efficiently and fairly, his patrons will change from time to time. The public likes change and will try other florists for no special reason. If for a good period of time his service and flowers have been of high quality, those same patrons will return to his shop. Maintaining the highest ethical, artistic and business standards will bring them back soon.

N. H. Comish, professor of business administration at the University of Oregon, conducted a questionnaire survey early in 1949 to ascertain why customers discontinue patronage of individual stores. Of 21,755 replies received 677 pertained to flower shops, and the reasons are shown in the following chart:

	PERCENTAGE OF REASONS GIVEN	
	<i>Flower Shops</i>	<i>All Types of Stores</i>
High prices	37.44	23.59
Poor quality of goods	11.87	12.31
Delay in store services	8.98	10.05
Indifferent salespeople	6.08	8.48
Errors	5.17	3.95
Attempted substitution of goods	5.02	4.35
Tricky methods	3.95	2.97
Store arrangement or appearance	3.34	4.37
Misrepresentation of goods	3.04	6.87
Haughtiness of salespeople	2.89	6.18
Overinsistence of salespeople	2.73	6.38
Wrong policies of management	2.73	3.18
Reluctance to exchange items	2.13	3.21
Poor advertising	1.97	.81
Ignorance of goods	1.90	2.49
Additional reasons	.76	.81

Mr. Comish makes the following recommendations as a result of this survey:

How, then, can many florists aid in helping to stop the loss of customer trade? First of all, by training their salespeople in a favorable approach, which is prompt, pleasant, courteous and business-like. Second, by inspiring their salespeople to acquire an adequate knowledge of their merchandise. Third, by knowing what selling appeals to employ. Fourth, how to answer adequately and effectively common objections to buying. Fifth, how to close sales effectively without offense, or briefly, how to sell flowers that will not come back to customers who will. Sixth, many florists should lower some of their prices.

Finally, florists might improve their management and policies so that they will conform more closely to the approval of patrons.

Aside from these suggestions to combat loss of trade, a florist may solicit criticisms from his customers. He should be anxious to have their helpful comments. Some florists mail cards to new customers which might be worded in this manner:

"It was gratifying to have your order for flowers. Our business is predicated solely on satisfied customers, and we count you among their number. We therefore, solicit your prompt criticism and suggestions at any time.

"Please let us hear from you whenever we may be of service. Your telephone orders will receive our most conscientious attention."

Or, a small card could be enclosed with each flower order delivered as follows:

"We hope these flowers please you. If not, we would appreciate knowing it, because we consider every order an obligation to give satisfaction."

A florist sufficiently solicitous to invite criticism will find that his shop phones ring with more compliments than complaints. The postman will bring in notes of appreciation instead of gripes and past due payments. This florist's business will grow and flourish on the good will and advertising created by his satisfied customers.

XXIV * *Good Will and Civic Activities*

Good will is an intangible asset arising from the reputation of a business and its relations with customers, distinct from the value of stock, fixtures and other property. The good will of a flower shop might be of much greater value than all other assets combined. This one asset is always taken into consideration at the time of sale of the business, when it is given a definite monetary value.

For the purposes of this discussion, good will is treated in its broader aspect as a working business asset, a value of inestimable worth that makes persons want to do business with a particular florist. It is the characteristic which differentiates an old established business from a new one at its beginning. All business endeavor is aimed at building good will, the foundation for progress and continuously increasing sales. Florists are vitally interested in this and have in their future the opportunity and obligation to increase their business volume through improved public relations.

FACTORS IN BUILDING GOOD WILL

Every activity in the flower shop may establish and create more good will. If some of them are poorly managed they may detract from the good will efforts of other departments. In other words, even if the advertising and delivery operations were superb, sales and designing activities of mediocre quality would offset all of the good will of the former. The good impressions made by the shop manager in personal contacts with customers and the public may be canceled by negligence and arrogance of other employees. The value of good window and shop displays may be nullified by unethical practices of management.

The good will created over a long period of time may be ren-

dered worthless in a few months through the lackadaisical attitude of employees. This might occur during the illness or absence of the owner or manager of a flower shop. It may happen after the purchase of a new shop with a fine reputation by a buyer who is unfamiliar with shop management and unaware of the value of maintaining and creating good will.

Personality is one of the main factors. In small flower shops, the proprietor's personality is largely that of the business, because every phase of the operation has his personal attention. All contacts are made by him. In larger flower shops, the personality of the owner is projected more indirectly, because so much of the work must of necessity be delegated to employees. His good judgment in making the right choice of personnel and selecting the best retail policies might result in the creation of a much stronger personality for his business than could possibly have been built by himself alone.

Large corporations have definite personalities which have been built by their management. Like individuals, they make friends through the service they render, the merchandise they sell, the advertising which bears their name and trade-mark and every other thing they do which gives them a reputation for fair dealing. The stock-holders through their franchise elect the individuals to manage the affairs of the company, and in making these decisions they determine the personality of the business. Through excellent management some well known corporations have been able to build their good will to values greater than their combined tangible assets worth hundreds of millions of dollars.

The florist can create for his business these same values. The ability to make friends and to make persons want to buy flowers and to return again and again as satisfied customers is the motivating factor in good will.

How do we make friends for our flower shop? Good merchandise, fair prices, personality, unusual designing, advertising, letter writing and other factors might be included in the answers to this question. Most florists are cognizant of these values but overlook other possibilities in many activities outside of their own shops which have an important bearing on their reputations.

CIVIC ACTIVITIES

Reputation is built on things other than the conduct of one's business. A florist who has built a name for his shop with good flowers well designed at a fair price can build additional good will by assuming civic obligations in his community. These duties should be accepted and performed to the best of his ability and not with the mercenary attitude of self-aggrandisement. The manner in which a florist accepts and performs positions on civic committees will determine their value in good will. An humble spirit, combined with his sincere effort to be of service, will create a lasting good impression, as contrasted with a desire for publicity and no genuine interest in the assignment.

Almost every business district has its merchants' association, of which the flower shop should be a part. It affords a good opportunity for fellowship and cooperation with other businessmen. Membership entails the assumption of an equal share of the responsibility. The contacts made will lead to more business, if the attitude of the florist creates good will.

Acquaintance with other businessmen affords the florist the privilege of broadening his outlook on business in his community and making his flower shop fit the picture. Affiliation with the chamber of commerce should receive serious consideration by the florist. Service clubs and lodges are fine outside activities also, as is work with worthy charitable organizations. Aside from being of service to others, the florist through his work and financial support is creating for himself good will among his fellow citizens.

Every citizen owes to his country, city and church an allegiance to serve them faithfully and unselfishly. Fulfilling these obligations with zealous devotion increases the stature and reputation of any man. The florist excuses himself too often with the alibi that his hands are too full of his own business. Little does that florist realize the value of living with his fellow man rather than off of him. The folly of selfishness tears down much of the framework of other good will that that florist is trying to build.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Social club memberships enable the florist to broaden his acquaintances. Social contacts are valuable, because people like to do business with people they know.

Caution must be exercised in selecting these extracurricular activities. Being a joiner, with a membership in all groups and no time to develop any on them, is a waste of money. Opportunities to serve on civic projects and to work in other clubs are too numerous to tackle all at once. Many worth-while activities must be bypassed by the florist who knows that his fellow citizens hold him in higher esteem for good work in a few activities rather than a feeble effort in many.

A number of florists have definite policies pertaining to public relations. Their plans are outlined and followed for a period of time, and as new ideas develop, the programs are changed. They have, through these public relations promoted an increase in flower sales, prestige and good will for their shops.

One florist makes it a policy to give annually no more than fifty handsome gifts for prizes at benefits sponsored by charitable organizations at his city. These clubs and organizations are advised in his advertising that the first fifty to register the dates for their affairs at his shop will receive a gift of \$5 value, which may be called for on the date of the benefit. In that way he can budget his advertising fund and will have a ready answer to benefit requests which are made after his list is complete for the year.

Another shop has a flower demonstration and talk on flowers which is given at luncheon groups for either men or women. The program usually runs for a period of thirty to forty minutes and is instructive on the use of flowers, their origin and care. That florist has found it advisable not to give the program more than twice per month and accepts invitations to groups of fifty or more until his quota is filled for the year. The programs are varied according to the interests of the audiences.

Another florist holds open house for groups of school children at

his greenhouse and shop one hour each week and conducts a tour through his establishment for all groups accompanied by teachers.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER FLORISTS

A florist might make it a policy to send one bouquet each day to some deserving person mentioned in the news. It might be a visiting dignitary, a new mayor, an injured child, or a courageous person facing adversity. One florist sends a bouquet to every child born out of wedlock in the Florence Crittenton home in his city. These generally are the only flowers received by those mothers, because their whereabouts in the unfortunate circumstances are not known by their friends. Although these actions on the part of the florist are entirely charitable and not done primarily for publicity, they are bound to create additional good will for him.

Some florists write articles of interest for newspapers and trade publications pertaining to flowers or their business. The publicity may be more valuable than paid advertising in the same space. The expression and sharing of knowledge, if done in the right spirit, and the formulation of a public relations program incorporating these or other ideas are certain to build good will for the florist.

A large number of florists do not realize yet that their relationships with members of their own industry have a definite bearing upon their good will. The respect and friendship of a florist for his fellow florists are felt by his customers and the public. When friends and customers mention the names of other florists while discussing an order or in general conversation with a florist, that florist's attitude and reply will pigeonhole him as being tolerant, genuine and broad-minded or bigoted, jealous and selfish. The former will build good will, and the latter will tear it down.

It is wise never to berate another florist. If something good cannot honestly be said about him, say nothing or evade the question. On the other hand, it is just as foolish to palaver insincerely in a supposedly complimentary fashion about your brother florist. When told

about a beautiful piece of work or display of another florist, show interest and not boredom. Above all things do not belittle the other florist's ability and try to build up your own by telling about more beautiful things you have done. Your customer knows what you do and prefers your work. He would not be telling you about the other florist if he did not think you were interested in securing a new idea which might be helpful when adapted to your own work.

A wholesale florist who had visited flower shops for many years once told me of a unique experience he had had in one store. For the first time in many years he had had the pleasure of hearing a florist recommend another florist for a certain piece of work. He complimented the florist for his attitude and asked him if that happened often. Answering affirmatively, the florist said that it created a good feeling within himself, that his customers appreciated his recommendations and that the other florists might in turn say a good word for him when the opportunity presented itself. Whether they did or not, that florist is establishing for himself a sound reputation based on a fine character.

Florists are becoming more and more aware of the fact that other florists are not their real competitors. By cooperating with one another in the solution of their common problems, florists form steadfast friendships. They willingly share their knowledge and call upon each other for favors, such as supplying needed stock which might not be immediately available on the wholesale market. By working together they are able to create more good will for all florists which results in more sales of flowers to customers who might otherwise have bought other gift merchandise from their real competitors, the candy shops, gift stores, perfume bars, etc.

The florists' full support of and loyalty to their own trade organizations and florists' clubs also increase their good will. Willingness to serve as officers and committeemen in these organizations furthering their progress indicates their positive thinking. That kind of service leads to accomplishments which florists acting individually can never hope to attain.

THE TRADESMAN OR DRUMMER

Fortunately there are comparatively few florists who do not care what any other florist or tradesman connected with the industry thinks of them. Those few are the ones who are the bane of the drummers' existence. The traveling salesman often steers clear of those shops, because he dreads the harshness of the reception, is bored with the tales of woe and hard times he always encounters and becomes tired of listening to unjustified complaints about the merchandise he is selling.

In other shops, these same drummers are met with a pleasant, optimistic greeting and are treated courteously, and they feel well repaid for their call whether they leave with an order or not. Those florists know that being busy, or not being busy enough, does not warrant their giving anyone the brush off.

The drummer should be looked upon by the florist as his ambassador, not as an unnecessary interrupter. He calls on florists over a large territory and has a vast amount of information about the industry. He knows how other shops operate and can make valuable hints and suggestions for improving the service in many shops. He brings and carries away information. Florists in other communities make inquiries about other shops with reference to their ability and integrity, with a view to sending them telegraph orders. The salesman may have the policy of making no recommendation for any florist, but, if he can be of real service, he generally is willing to express an opinion. That opinion will depend on the treatment he has received and the information he gained on his visit in the flower shop.

Intelligent florists know that one sure way to secure more good will is for all persons to leave their flower shops with good impressions of the staff and service. Those florists treat wholesalers, growers and tradesmen in the way they themselves would like to be treated were their positions reversed. It is a small world, and news spreads rapidly. So does the gospel of a florist's reputation.

Every contact in the social and business life of every florist strengthens or weakens his good will. For that reason, this most valuable asset deserves our constant protection and vigorous encouragement.

XXV * *The Grower and Wholesaler*

The retail florist needs some knowledge of the growing and distribution of flowers to operate his business intelligently. Unfortunately the problems encountered by the grower in the production of flowers and plants for the flower shop are seldom understood by the retail florist.

Invention, discoveries and developments of the past several decades have transformed the methods of growing and distribution greatly. Advances in transportation have been accompanied by equally great discoveries in the science of growing and the art of packing and caring for flowers. All of these changes have had and are exerting an influence on the operations of the retail florist.

The so-called local grower of years ago, with a limited territory and almost dictatorial control of his market is gone. Today the growers' problems are also problems vital to the interests of the retail and wholesale florists, and vice versa. Not only is cooperation closer between the separate branches of the industry, but within them as well. The growers exchange ideas with each other; wholesalers meet to solve mutual problems, and retailers unite and cooperate to advance the sale of more flowers.

The development of new techniques, leading directly to the tremendous growth of the flower industry, brings with it the necessity for broader vision and even closer cooperation within and between all branches of the industry to perpetuate and foster greater development.

COMMERCIAL GROWERS TODAY

The commercial grower today operates his plant scientifically. He has, in most instances, studied his business at a school of floriculture, where

he acquired a knowledge of entomology, plant pathology, soil chemistry and greenhouse management. If his own background does not include this training, then he may avail himself of the services of others who have been thus trained.

The grower not only has a great investment in education and training, but also in the physical equipment required for growing. Even the smallest grower, who operates without a greenhouse, has an investment in land, tools and equipment which amounts to thousands of dollars. The cost of growing flowers under glass takes thousands of dollars more capital for greenhouses, heating installation, various equipment and planting stock.

To take some of the gamble out of his business, the grower insures himself against fire, theft, wind and hail damage to his greenhouse and equipment, but he cannot insure against crop and market failures. Even under glass he is at the mercy of the weather to a large extent and yet must do everything possible to time his crops to meet the demand. This is particularly important on flower-buying holidays, when the market prices are high because of the heavy demand.

Some growers specialize in certain crops, such as orchids, carnations, roses, chrysanthemums and potted plants while others grow diversified crops.

The business of growing flowers commercially is not vested in the hands of a few large companies. In contrast to the steel and automotive industries, this business is controlled by thousands of independent growers located in many communities. Their problems and methods of operation vary according to the climate, size of the community and type of growing.

EMPHASIS ON QUALITY

Quality is a primary consideration for the flower grower. Good stock finds a ready market whereas inferior stock will sell only when there is a general shortage of better flowers.

The grower in recent years has given substantial financial support to advertising programs and flower promotions of various kinds. This is one evidence of his broad understanding of the industry. He knows

that anything which helps the distribution and sale of more flowers ultimately will benefit him.

The strongest single influence in the industry is that of the grower because of his education, training, investment and wide-spread activities.

He often is criticized unfairly by the retail florist because of the lack of understanding. The grower's friendship should be cultivated rather than shunned, because he has much at stake in the industry. His knowledge as a grower and his influence in the industry are of inestimable value to the retailer in the solution of problems and the planning of programs for their mutual good.

In addition to the strong influence of supply and demand in establishing flower prices, the cost of production must be considered. If the prices of flowers fall below cost during a large portion of the year, the grower will suffer serious losses. When that condition prevails for any length of time, growers will be forced out of business, and the supply and production of flowers will diminish, with a resulting increase in price.

Demand and competition are, however, greater factors in determining prices than is the actual cost of production. They estimate their costs roughly and let demand and competition decide their selling price.

Underselling is not likely to be initiated by the grower who knows his actual production costs. However, he often is forced to meet competitor's prices and take losses, because of the actions of other growers, who do not have actual cost records or who disregard costs to increase sales volume. Unbalanced conditions of that kind can not last indefinitely, without some businesses going bankrupt.

PRICE STABILIZATION

Maintaining an even balance between production and demand is a problem for every individual connected with any branch of the florists' industry. The retailer has a definite responsibility, along with the grower and wholesaler, to move the growers' products when they reach the market.

One of the major criticisms of the florists' industry has been the extreme fluctuation in prices of flowers from the extreme high peaks at holiday times to the lows in the summer months and glut periods. This criticism has come from consumers, who cannot understand the reasons for the price extremes often encountered within a ten day period. The resistance of the public to this fluctuation is one of the hurdles the retail florist must face in selling flowers. Consequently, the retailer is vociferous in his desire for stabilized prices. Growers and wholesalers, too, doubtless would prefer a year-round price for all kinds of flowers.

Regardless of the unanimity of this general desire, the problems involved make any general price stabilization extremely difficult. Production costs vary in different climates and sections of the country. Air transportation has brought distant flower markets within a few hours' reach of every florist. To control prices would require planned production, concentrated management of growers and regulated distribution.

EFFORTS IN STABILIZATION

Some large growers of special crops, such as orchids, carnations and fleur d'amour have attempted to maintain a seasonal price. These trials have had fragmentary success. They have been fine in theory and are definite steps in the direction toward a solution of the price fluctuation problem. The stabilized price efforts thus far have been made at the wholesale level only. Without limitations on the retail florist and a vast advertising program, some of the plans have failed to accomplish their purpose, namely to sell more of the flowers so controlled.

A classic example of stabilizing wholesale prices is the accomplishment of the Colorado growers of carnations. The cooperation of those growers has enabled them to sell more carnations at a fair price. Their program has prevented pickling blooms or holding them on the plants for a higher price. Standing orders from their customers take practically all of the supply. The quantities sent to florists on holidays are prorated according to the extent of their weekly shipments at

the standing price. Part of their plan is the comprehensive cooperative advertising and promotion of Colorado, high-quality, graded carnations.

Wholesale price stabilization of certain flowers in some areas may prove worthwhile, but a general adoption of this practice does not seem feasible, because flowers are grown so widely by various growers under such different conditions. It might be more practicable for the retail florist to stabilize prices on popular flowers in his own shop, basing his price scale on the average costs of certain flowers in previous years. For instance, a florist might carry in stock a good grade of roses at \$5 per dozen the year around. At a few holiday times, he might take a loss on those orders, but goodwill and increased patronage could result in greatly increased annual sales for his shop, where buyers know they can always buy good roses at that price, rather than paying \$10 at one time and \$3 at another.

RETAIL COOPERATION

Another reason for the failure to stabilize prices on some flowers is the lack of cooperation on the part of the retail florist with the grower who has instituted such a plan. The florist who says he is wholeheartedly in favor of established prices abides by the plan only until the time arrives when another grower offers the same flowers at a lower price. In other words, he likes the plan at holidays, but loses interest in between peak buying periods, when other competitive growers are able to sell at a lower price because they receive much higher prices than did his grower at the peak periods.

To operate successfully, stabilization requires strict and constant adherence to the plan. The grower must reject offers for much higher prices from other florists at holiday times and cooperating retail florists must refuse to buy at lower prices at other times from other growers.

Unless the retail florist is willing to cooperate by keeping the price uniform on these flowers throughout the seasons, including holidays, the purpose of price stabilization is defeated. An often justified complaint of growers and wholesalers against the retail florist is that his high prices are unwarranted, particularly at holiday times. The human

frailty evident in the unstable reaction of growers and retailers to adhere to any set plan bolsters the certainty of the law of supply and demand as an ever-present price factor.

The demand of the industry for a uniform or standard method of grading flowers is becoming more marked. The handling and selling of definite and dependable grades of flowers are important, because they eliminate guesswork. The old method consists merely of sorting flowers in bunches as good, medium and poor. These classifications lose their meaning as quality changes during a season; at some time in the season the good grade may not be of as fine quality as was the medium earlier in the season.

GRADING STANDARDS

The retailer and consumer alike are anxious to know the exact quality of the flowers they order. To know a fancy grade of roses is of the same quality from any grower on any market would be a distinct benefit to anyone ordering roses.

As a result of research work done at Cornell University, in cooperation with the New York State Flower Growers, Inc., a system of grading flowers by weight has been developed. Dr. Kenneth Post, who has lectured widely to the industry on this subject, says:

Weight grading will permit florists to purchase the quality of product desired for a particular job. They will be assured that each flower in the bunch is of the same uniform quality as every other one in the bunch. The quality of each grade of each flower will be known, and the same quality for that grade can be depended upon at all times of the year. There will be a definite number of stems in each bunch of pom-pom chrysanthemums, and every stem in the bunch will be the same size, with a similar number of flowers on it. The retailer, the wholesaler and the grower can talk the same language about quality.

Weight grading refers to grading the flowers by weight per stem. Quality is made up of stem length, stem size and flower size. These factors are all accounted for in the weight of the stem. Weight is the same, regardless of season or locality, and is the most uniform measurement of quality.

The old method of grading roses on the basis of stem length can mean anything in quality, with proper length of stem on it. The grades of roses vary over the nation, and aside from knowing the length of stem, the buyer

must see the item before he purchases, if he is to be sure of what he will receive.

To be recognized, a grade must always be the same in any pack, regardless of season. All branches of the industry, even to the consumer, would benefit by a grading system.

After investigating many of the suggested methods of grading, our experimental work has shown us that weight is the one measure which determines the grade of flowers better than any other single measurement. Weight does not, however, measure crookedness of stem, color of flower or the shape of the flower. These factors, which cannot be measured by weight, are obvious to the grader and can readily be removed from the top grades.

The standard grades of cut flowers which have been established by the New York State Flower Growers are being tried by many members. The CSW trade-mark was developed to designate flowers graded by the weight system. To make it clear to buyers that this is the method of grading, and to indicate the quality they can expect within the pack, the trade-mark has been registered by the New York State Flower Growers. Any grower may obtain a license free-of-charge by writing the secretary, Harold Brookins, of Orchard Park, N. Y. In order to use the trade-mark, the grower must be licensed by the New York State Flower Growers. He must use the grade standards which have been established by the organization and revised as found desirable. He must grade label each bunch, must identify each bunch with his name, mark or by some other methods. He may use any size or color of label desired or work the emblem into his name. The grading of flowers by weight places like material together. It benefits the entire industry. It is easily understood, involves little labor, is protected by a trade-mark, and can be used for any cutflower type bearing a stem, foliage and a flower.

Standard grades have been established by the New York State Flower Growers, Inc., for various flowers. As an example the CSW grading table for carnations is as follows:

<i>Carnations</i>		
<i>CSW Grade Name</i>	<i>Weight Per Flower (Ounces)</i>	<i>Minimum Stem Length Inches</i>
Special	1 and over	24
Fancy	$\frac{3}{4}$ to 1	24
Extra	$\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$	18
First	$\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$	12
Second	$-\frac{1}{4}$	12

Flowers should be bunched with like flowers together. Stems should be reasonably straight, calyx not split and stems disbudded and suckered. Split calyxes, or those mended, could be graded as normal, but labeled No. 1 and so forth."

As soon as the demand of retail florists and flower consumers for standard grading becomes crystallized generally, then the grower and wholesaler will comply. Uniform grading will then be a requisite for the marketing of flowers everywhere.

THE GROWER-RETAILER

Many growers have their own retail shops in connection with their greenhouses. In other words they are operating two distinct branches of the business, growing and selling direct to the consumer. The records of the two branches of their businesses should be kept separately. This, however, is not the case in many instances, and, consequently, those grower-florists cannot tell their cost of production and the cost of distribution through the retail outlets. It is possible they do not know which branch of their business is profitable, because of the haphazard management.

In the community where other retail flower shops are operated in a businesslike way, the grower-retailer is often referred to as unfair competition, because he sells his flowers at prices near to what the other florists pay on the wholesale market. This he is able to do because he has eliminated the middleman or wholesaler in his operation. It is not unethical, but is referred to as unfair competition because he does not figure costs and profits at a fair amount on both the growing and retail operations.

That grower generally has difficulty in disposing of his surplus stock to other florists who consider his operation unfair. He would be ahead financially if he sold his flowers from the greenhouse to his retail shop at prevailing wholesale prices. However, he also should be fair to the public. If he can realize a fair profit by selling flowers at a low price and increase his volume by doing so, that is his right and an obligation he owes to the flower-buying public.

It is the privilege of the grower-retailer to sell at any price he

wishes, but the application of good business logic will result in his making a fair profit on both operations.

It is useless for one branch of the industry to blame another for problems of price, distribution, standards, production, etc. The responsibility for solution is that of the entire industry whose individual interests are closely interlocked. Some retailers, besides growing, have interests in wholesale firms. Also, it has been estimated that more than half of the retailers do some growing.

Thoughtless criticism of growers and retailers by each other in many cases amounts to nothing more than talking to one's self. Broad-minded leaders in all branches of the industry are working to break down existing barriers in the thinking of each branch of floriculture. When that goal is reached all branches of the industry will work harmoniously toward the solution of their problems, with consideration for the general welfare of each other.

THE WHOLESALE

The wholesale florist operates as a distributor of all cut flower stock consigned or sold to him by growers. Retail florists rely on the wholesaler to fill their requirements for flowers of all kinds. Many wholesale florists also carry florists supplies, such as ribbon, baskets, moss, frames, etc. Some wholesalers handle a general line of cut flowers and supplies, whereas others handle only flowers of certain varieties or specialize in supplies. Supplies generally are purchased outright by the wholesaler and rarely consigned to him.

It has been estimated that about two-thirds of the flowers on the market are consigned to wholesalers and the remainder are purchased outright. Most wholesale houses obtain flowers from a number of growers, some of whom may be located in other parts of the country. The reason for this is obvious. It enables the wholesaler to have a steady supply at all times. When some varieties are not available locally, flowers are shipped in from distant growers.

The grower, on consignment of flowers, might indicate to the wholesaler the price he should receive for them, but most often the price is left to the discretion of the wholesaler. He is expected to

obtain as much as possible for the stock consigned to him. The wholesaler usually receives a fifteen per cent commission for handling greenhouse flowers and collecting the accounts from retail florists. It is customary for him to receive a larger commission on consignments from growers of outdoor stock, particularly when shipped from distant points. This difference is offset by shipping costs and gives some protection to his regular growers. Everything else being equal, the stock grown locally will sell first.

The flowers from each grower may be labeled with a number or symbol and the wholesaler can keep a record of the sales for each grower, indicating on each invoice the grower's number. In that way the grower may ascertain the name of the florist using his stock and the amount that florist paid for it, and the date of sale. If some flowers consigned by a grower are sold at a reduced rate or not sold at all, the wholesaler on his periodical report to the grower may indicate the reasons and disposition made of them, thus giving the grower a fair and complete report.

The major wholesale flower markets, composed of several wholesale florists, are found in such cities as Chicago, New York, Boston, San Francisco, etc. Weekly reports of current flower prices and general conditions on these markets are published in the trade papers for the information of the industry. These flower market quotations give the low and high price quoted on each flower variety for that week. Only the large New York flower market publishes complete daily reports with comments on quality of the stock, prices, quantities of various flowers received, amounts sold, held over or dumped. These daily reports are published by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets which also has supervision of licenses and bonds for commission merchants who deal in floriculture products.

Cities with a population approximating 100,000 usually have at least one wholesale florist. In many instances this is a branch office of a wholesale firm in a larger city. Cities with a population of about 500,000 may have from three to five wholesale florists, and larger cities as many as ten to forty or more. Most of these markets serve a territory of several states. About eighty per cent of the sales by

wholesale florists are made on credit, the terms most frequently offered are thirty days net. Fairly uniform credit regulations prevail on most markets. They should be strictly observed by both retailers and wholesalers for their mutual benefit.

The wholesaler occupies a strategic position in the industry, in that his contact with growers and retailers enables him to gauge quite accurately the pulse of the industry. As middleman he must satisfy the grower by selling his flowers at a satisfactory price and must also adequately service the retail florist by filling his requirements. At the same time, he must operate in the face of competition from other wholesalers on his own market, as well as meeting competition from all sections of the country.

BUYING PRACTICES

The retail florist would be lost without the facilities of wholesale florists. Stock from many growers is assembled for the retailer's selection, saving him innumerable trips to greenhouses and fields to secure the same flowers. In addition to that, the wholesale houses usually are concentrated in one section of the city, in many cases within the radius of a few blocks or even in one large building—a definite convenience for all concerned.

The wholesale florist knows in advance when certain flowers will be available, and he can anticipate the demand for them and stimulate sales of that stock by advising the retail florists. The bulk of advertising done by wholesale florists is through direct mail and trade publications.

Many of the flowers are purchased by retail florists via the telephone, although most shops send their buyers to market daily. Other florists visit the market in person once or twice a week and order by telephone on other days. Some shops make it a practice to stock up heavily one day a week, placing small fill-in orders during the rest of the week. Heavy buying days are usually Thursday and Friday, with the retail florists stocking for anticipated, heavy week-end business. On some markets this tendency has caused higher prices on flowers on those days, with more reasonable

prices on other days. It is better business to buy fresh flowers daily whenever possible, thereby obtaining better prices and maintaining a stock of fresher flowers at all times.

STANDING ORDERS

A large number of standing orders are placed by retail shops to cover their minimum requirements. These orders receive preferred attention and are augmented by other purchases as needed. Florists in smaller towns at a distance from the market use this system because their personal visits at wholesale markets are infrequent. Much of their information as to available items and prices is secured from trade publications and bulletins sent by wholesalers.

Some wholesale florists offer free delivery on all orders to the retail shop. A few send out salesmen in trucks loaded with flowers and supplies thus bringing their service to the door of the retail shop.

THE GROWER-WHOLESALE

Many growers are in reality also wholesalers, in that they sell flowers direct to retail florists, without the facilities of an established wholesale house. This method of operation may be preferred by the grower or necessitated by his distance from the market. Separating his two activities may be difficult, but for accuracy of records and profits, it is as important that he do so as it is for the grower-retailer. When he sells, packs and delivers his stock, the added services should be paid for as they would be if sold for him through a wholesale florist. His stock, in that case, would be in fair competition with that of other growers.

Most pot plant growers deal directly with the retail florist. Their supply of blooming plants, such as chrysanthemums, poinsettias, Easter lilies, azaleas, tulips, etc., accounts for a substantial volume of the florists' business, particularly at holiday times. One obvious reason for the sale of pot plants direct to the retailer from the grower is convenience. The bulk of potted plants and the extra handling and care required in storage, without greenhouse facilities, make any other

method impractical. However, some are sold in wholesale houses from samples, with delivery direct from greenhouses. Potted blooming plants are sold in competition with cut flowers and often are preferred because of more reasonable prices.

Commercial growers of foliage plants also sell directly to retail florists, although some distribution of their stock is made through wholesale houses.

Taking into consideration the quantity of stock sold by growers to retailers, in addition to the quantity sold by retail growers direct to consumers, it is apparent that a substantial portion of all flowers sold move through regular wholesale channels.

Grower ownership of wholesale firms is not common. By joining with one or more other growers in establishing a separate partnership or corporation for wholesaling, the growers control policies of distribution and share the added profit of that operation. Good management is just as imperative to success in these cooperative ventures as it is with any other kind of wholesale ownership.

COOPERATION ESSENTIAL

Growers and wholesalers are cooperating with retail florists in many sections of the country on advertising and promotion programs. The financial support generally is given through allied organizations, contributions being based on sales volume. The responsibility for increasing consumer use of flowers is being accepted by all branches of the industry.

Some growers have formed separate organizations for the primary purpose of promoting wider use of their flowers. Notable examples are Roses, Inc. and the Colorado Carnation Grower's Society. A few larger production and wholesaling firms are promoting sales of flowers for openings and give-aways, furnishing the retailer with advertising matter, letters, etc., and paying the retail florist a fair commission if the transaction is made with one of his customers. These producers and wholesalers are doing everything possible to increase flower sales at the retail level, without losing the good will of the retail florist.

All branches of the industry are realizing that attractive buildings and greenhouses with landscaped grounds are worthwhile expenditures for publicity. Increased interest in those establishments by the public also increases the pride of owners and employees in the business.

Wholesalers and growers alike have been criticized by retailers on many occasions for unfair practices. Florists who have placed advance orders for holiday stock become disgruntled when the prices are lowered just prior to a holiday for the benefit of late buyers only. Retailers boycott some growers and wholesalers who sell stock at wholesale prices direct to the consumer. Criticisms also are made because some wholesalers and growers offer lower prices to some buyers, or because they offer discriminatory discounts and credit privileges to some florists. In too many cases, however, the accusations are made without a sincere effort to secure all of the facts pertinent to the situation.

Quality, price, service and fair dealing will always be the criteria followed by retail florists in selecting the firms from which they buy flowers and supplies.

When the grower's production of flowers advances more rapidly than demand, definite problems are created: To whom should the growers and wholesalers sell their excess flower supply? Should their sales be confined to regular retail florists' channels, or should they sell to street vendors, grocery stores, department stores, etc.?

These problems can be solved only with the sincere and unselfish cooperation of all branches of the industry. Selfish group interests will have to be subordinate to the good of the whole industry, the future of which is ultimately dependent on the judgment of the consumer.

Over-production, or glutted markets, is of sufficient importance to receive detailed discussion in the following chapter.

XXVI * *The Glutted Market or Oversupply*

CAUSES

When the supply or production of flowers greatly exceeds the demand or sales, the condition is commonly referred to as a glut. This oversupply is a rarity at times, such as during the years of World War II. When the condition did occur occasionally during that period, it was not given serious consideration, because the industry had just about all the business it could handle in spite of high prices. However, in a short span of time thereafter, developments, such as the availability of more materials, more manpower, discovery of new insecticides, labor-saving devices, building of more greenhouses and increasing field production areas, reversed that situation, and markets were in an almost continuing state of oversupply. When the condition becomes extreme, wholesalers, retailers and growers are baffled by their glutted markets.

Aside from such general glut-producing conditions, there are local or short time causes, too. Unfavorable weather is frequently the cause. Cold, dark days may retard a crop timed by the grower for holiday sales, creating a great oversupply of flowers after the holiday demand has passed. Unseasonably warm weather may hasten maturing of a flower crop, causing an unusually large production in a short time.

A large grower may make an error in judgment on the timing of his crop and create the same situation. In spite of all the devices, such as temperature control, shading and artificial light, used by growers to control production and time their crops, weather conditions can be sufficiently extreme to disrupt their plans completely. Snowstorms, hurricanes and floods may disrupt transportation and

general business conditions in an area to such an extent that flower sales are reduced to a fraction of normal.

Adverse labor conditions, such as unemployment caused by factory shutdowns and strikes or economic depressions, are also factors in causing glutted flower markets in the areas affected.

Overlooking these outside extreme influences, there are circumstances in the industry itself which are responsible for a continuing state of over-supply. The retailer points his finger at the grower accusing him of being over-ambitious in producing more than the demand warrants. The grower and wholesaler refute that statement by saying that the retail florist is not promoting the sale of flowers sufficiently and is not pricing flowers low enough to increase sales volume. The retail florist makes a rebuttal argument that the promotion for increased sales is just as much the responsibility of the grower and that he will lower his prices only when the grower reduces the cost to him. Arguments and accusations of that kind between branches of the industry end where they start and can continue ad infinitum, with nothing accomplished other than antagonism, making wider the gap which must be bridged with cooperation to reach any kind of solution.

PROMOTION

The normal market is a buyers' market, one of abundant supply in all commodities. Following almost a decade of shortages in flower production during the 1940's it was difficult for the industry to adjust itself. The problem of reverting from a sellers' market to a buyers' market requires revolutionary changes in the methods of operation and mental attitudes of every worker connected with the florists' industry.

The prolonged sellers' market of wartimes deteriorated many of the qualities which make a healthy economy. The easy money of inflation periods develops habits of action and thought not easily changed. Unless those habits change and keep pace with the transition to increased production and declining demand, they pave the road to depressions and recessions in business.

The biggest hurdle for the florists' industry in meeting the challenge of overproduction at any time is that of a hopeless mental outlook. Lackadaisical attitudes and inertia must be replaced by alert, optimistic thinking and aggressive promotion.

NOT OVERPRODUCTION

Flower production has never been too great; instead, flower consumption has been too small. Markets could be created for twice the production of any period, if the industry puts its shoulder to the wheel. Such planning is contrary to the short sighted ideas in the minds of a few growers, who say that production should be reduced, and a minority of the retail florists, who continue the practice of selling a few flowers at unfairly high prices, instead of selling more flowers with a reasonable profit.

An effective promotional program is not the responsibility of any one group of the industry. The only sure cure for oversupply is salesmanship. A look at the activity in other progressive industries should convince the most skeptical individual that flowers need more than anything else real cooperative promotion and aggressive creative salesmanship to lift the industry to its rightful position in the economy of this country. Other industries confronted with over-production meet it by increasing the consumption. Their methods of promotion are backed by the production, distribution and retail sales departments.

These activities in the flower industry are for the most part separately owned and managed. The cooperation of wholesalers, retailers and growers as an effective team, combining talents and funds, can promote more flower sales than would be possible if they acted independently.

A good start in cooperative effort has been made by local Allieds and the Society of American Florists in fostering the formation of Allied organizations at many cities, with all branches of the industry paying a percentage of their sales or purchases into a fund which is used for promotion. In addition to that, the Society of American Florists has a promotional program, which, through greater

membership and financial support, has possibilities of expanding into one comparable with that of other industries.

Aside from cooperation in organizations, there are responsibilities pertaining to gluts and oversupply which fall generally into the categories of each branch of the industry.

THE GROWER'S RESPONSIBILITY

The production of flowers carries with it the natural obligation and disposition to sell or dispose of the crop at prices which warrant a fair profit. On a glutted market these prices are often only a fraction of the cost of production. It stands to reason that the losses incurred at those times must be offset by increased prices when there is a heavy demand.

Growers often can foresee a glutted market in advance. They should notify wholesalers and retailers of peak production periods as soon as possible, so that every effort may be exerted to move as much of the excess stock as possible. The reduction in prices on the flowers glutting a market will depend on the size of the glut and prospective sales volume.

The grower should be stimulated sufficiently in his own interest to do a good amount of advertising and promotion to create an increased demand through regular channels. Only when that grower or group of growers has done everything possible to accomplish this purpose should they resort to other means of distribution. When the grower has been fair in the advance planning of special advertising, offers to pay a good portion of advertising cost and then receives only lukewarm cooperation from retail florists, his only recourse is to turn to chain stores, grocery stores, drugstores, street vendors, etc. The prices and terms in no case should be better than those previously offered to retail florists.

When retailers are unable to handle all of the stock glutting a market and do not cooperate in selling it at proportionately lower prices by increased advertising and promotion, they should not complain or boycott a grower who sells his surplus through other channels. In many cases this left over stock is of inferior quality

and not adaptable to the work and services of many florists, but finds a ready sale in curb stands.

ADVERTISING POSSIBILITIES

It is common practice to advertise heavily in times of great demand, such as holidays. It is equally imperative to advertise as much or more at times of light demand and loaded markets. Advertising flowers then at low prices will encourage more persons to use flowers in their homes. This is a field which needs cooperative promotion, a fair share of which should be charged to the grower.

The producers of automobiles, fabrics, rugs, appliances, etc., invest great amounts in advertising and promoting their products to the public. The same cannot be said for flower growers. To charge them with like percentages of their budgets for advertising would not be fair or practical at once, but, if the plan were undertaken and developed gradually, there would develop such a large demand that twice the number of retail flower shops and three times the personnel would be required to distribute their production.

The most satisfactory method of grower advertising and promotion is generous participation in allied organizations, with wholesalers and retailers. The progressive grower is most frequently the instigator and major influence in organizing allied associations for the purpose of cooperative advertising. In some communities where this is not the case, the grower, through cajoling and pressure from retailers and wholesalers finally joins in the promotional activities of others and gives only the minimum financial and moral support. That grower is hurting himself more than anyone else by retarding the growth of his own industry, which has before it the possibility of doubling in size, productivity and service to the public. He is also reaping the benefits of promotion by others, without paying his share of the cost.

The leadership of growers everywhere in planning cooperative advertising as the solution to this problem will give far greater impetus to the chances for success in the early formation of more of these associations. Their influence, talent and prestige are needed

by the industry. That kind of cooperation should be the minimum endeavor of every grower—an assurance and example to other industry interests for the future progress and benefit of all.

THE WHOLESALE'S RESPONSIBILITY

The wholesaler, like the grower, should be charged with the responsibility of giving retail florists advance information of the increased supply of specific flowers. He should work closely with growers and retailers in making detailed plans for selling all of that stock. His cooperation should be volunteered in the financial and moral support of all programs for advertising and promotion. His methods should be as fair and ethical as that of the growers he represents and the florists to whom he sells flowers.

When the market is glutted, the wholesaler is faced with great temptations. One of them is the inclination to sell to anyone who makes him a good offer, whether it be a florist or not. He naturally attempts to sell volume buyers first and overlooks small florists in the wish to move his stock by truck loads and not bundles. With perishable flowers on his tables and in his refrigerators, it is hard to remember and apply the old adage; "Tiny drops of water—make a mighty ocean." Timing the work is all important, and only advance sales efforts can save the wholesaler and grower the loss of dumping unsold stock.

Another temptation facing the wholesaler in a glutted market is to call the slow pay florist or the one who is entitled to C.O.D. terms only and offer him quantities of stock on open account. Although this type of florist does not have a good credit rating, the wholesaler deals with him on the grounds that he probably would have to dump the flowers anyway. Most often the slow pay florist will not pay the bill, making him an unfair competitor to other florists who conscientiously maintain a good credit rating. That florist is operating at the expense of growers, wholesalers and other florists who are obliged to pay higher prices for flowers caused by bad debt losses of wholesalers and growers.

The granting of special low prices and terms to street vendors and chain stores in preference to retail florists is just as unethical. One price and like terms to all florists, resorting only to sales in other channels on the same terms when chances of sale to retail florists are exhausted, will earn the wholesaler the rightful respect of the industry.

The wholesale florist in all cases can demonstrate his salesmanship by encouraging retailers and growers on the idea of closer cooperation for the solution of their mutual problems. His service in that respect is real leadership.

THE RETAILER'S RESPONSIBILITY

The retail florist has the ability and is in a position to do more than either the wholesaler or the grower to alleviate the overstocked flower market. The unfortunate fact is that he usually does not consider an excessive supply of flowers in the wholesale houses as his responsibility in any sense of the word. His vision too rarely goes beyond the walls of his own shop. There has, however, been a strong tendency in recent years against this idea of isolation. The retailer is beginning to realize that the game of playing "lone wolf" does not pay. Every day more of his own experiences prove that he advances in ratio to the progress of wholesalers, growers, and other retail florists.

His dollars spent through allied organizations in cooperative advertising and promotion reap at least as much benefit for him as most of his own expenditures for individual advertising. His association with wholesalers and growers is furnishing him with a broader insight into the future possibilities of the industry.

DISPOSING OF GLUT ITEMS

His responsibility as a salesman of flowers carries with it an obligation for a much greater sales effort in times of glut. This includes a wider use and display of flowers which are plentiful. Florists' windows devoid of fresh flowers are not evidence of a cooperative

spirit in sales promotion. Nor is the purchase of a meager or minimum amount of flowers for the display refrigerator. Instead, the florist should buy heavily when the supply is plentiful. More flowers on display will stimulate better salesmanship and encourage larger sales.

In no case should a retail florist take advantage of a glutted market to make excessive profits. His duty to the industry and the public is to lower his selling price in accordance with his low purchase price. Some florists wisely use large quantities of flowers at these times as gifts to their good customers and place arrangements of them in public places to create good will and a wider appreciation of flowers.

Due to the great emphasis placed on floral art, a great many florists have lost sight of the profitable field for sales of loose cut flowers. More emphasis must be placed on the sale of flowers in bulk to move the increased production. More florists should appeal to the shopper with low cash and carry prices on plentiful flowers. Where and when available, prepackaged flowers should be sold in flower shops on the same basis. If those methods are not undertaken by retail florists, they will have to be satisfied with sales of flower art only in the future, because the grower will have to give his increasing surplus of flowers to other merchants who are anxious to sell it in volume at low prices.

Many retail florists have minimum set prices on various flower arrangements. When there is an excessive supply at half price, those florists should use twice the number of flowers in those arrangements and explain to their customers that at times the abundant supply and low prices make this possible.

Special sales should be planned by retail florists. This also may be done cooperatively to move large quantities of flowers from a glutted market, as has been successfully demonstrated by some allied organizations. With cleverly worded advertising quoting a city-wide price applicable in all member shops, the Seattle Allied Florists ran sizable newspaper ads in March 1949 as follows:

Caught with our sun shades up! On sale Friday and Saturday only. Favorable weather has brought these beautiful flowers into bloom in such quantities that we offer 100,000 carnations at 97 cents per dozen, cash and carry. No phone orders. Get them now at your Allied Florist. At this sensationally low price you can afford to really bring a breath of spring into your home with a variety of these beautiful flowers. You'll find them in a number of colors, freshly cut and in full bloom. At this low price we can offer them cash and carry only—and no phone orders, please.

In two days they sold 140,000 carnations in that city!

Low advertised prices will bring new faces into flower shops and make customers of people who never before patronized florists. It has been estimated that less than one-fifth of the population buy flowers and then only on rare occasions. To meet increased production more flowers must be sold to more people, and no one can argue that the prospects are scarce.

Retail florists rebel at fluctuating prices because their customers do not understand the reasons for them. That argument can be answered by asking why they do not understand. Education through publicity and advertising explaining those reasons to the public is the only solution. The retail florists should take the lead in formulating such a program in which the entire industry would cooperate.

The perennial complaint of retailers about flowers being sold unfairly outside regular channels in the industry is not always justified. Supermarkets and street vendors may be an asset to florists and growers alike. Aside from the publicity gained from their displays, their merchandising fills a need, creates a more universal love of flowers and ultimately makes new customers for the flower shop.

Flower stalls, street peddlers and supermarkets are the personal preference of many persons because of the convenience, commercial atmosphere, lower prices and quicker service, which are lacking in many flower shops. Most of the flowers sold in this way are for home use. It may be that the pioneering being done by these merchants will lead florists to keener efforts and closer cooperation really to develop the field of home consumption of flowers. The retail florist should cease worrying about *who* is selling flowers and start

worrying about *why* the public buys them and *how* to make it buy more.

Flowers can be made a necessity in everyday life. Cooperation of the industry in expanding the regular use of flowers is the only answer to oversupply and increased production.

XXVII * *Telegraphing Flowers*

A UNIQUE MERCHANDISING IDEA

Just prior to 1900 a few enterprising florists conceived the idea of a flowers-by-wire service which after years of experience and organizational development has accounted for annual sales estimated in excess of \$40,000,000. The leadership of those florists developed that unique idea into a service which is today taken for granted by the public and florists alike. The success of this important part of the florists' business may be attributed to the fact that the idea filled a vital need and was advertised properly and promoted by florists individually and cooperatively. The sales of flowers-by-wire have increased year by year, because this program is being broadened and because individual florists have sufficient pride and judgment to know that only ethical conscientious handling of these orders will continue to merit public confidence.

The romance of telegraphing flowers has captured the imagination of flower buyers. To be able to walk into a flower shop and order flowers for delivery a few hours later at a distant city is a service unique to the flower industry.

FLOWERS-BY-WIRE ORGANIZATIONS

The details involved in the handling of telegraph orders required the formation of an organization for that purpose. In the beginning, progress was slow, but, by 1920 the organization, which had been incorporated under Michigan laws as the Florists' Telegraph Delivery Association, was strong enough to operate efficiently. Since that time, expansion of the activities and perfections in the operations have made F.T.D. one of the most respected and progressive non-profit cooperative corporations in the world.

The business affairs are handled by a general manager at the headquarters office located at 149 Michigan Avenue, Detroit, Michigan. Annual meetings are held at which members elect officers and directors and conduct their business as would the stockholders in any other corporation. Various departments are organized to handle membership and dues, advertising and sales, bookkeeping, etc.

F.T.D. operates a clearing house equipped with International Business Machines to facilitate sorting and recording members' accounts. Every retail member reports weekly his incoming orders received from other members, and the clearinghouse credits his account with these orders, less twenty per cent commission for the sending florist. The out-going orders sent by each florist to other members are entered as debits to his account. At the end of each month checks or statements are mailed to florists having credit or debit balances. The clearinghouse operates much like a bank, charging the members for dues, collection and advertising fees, which amounts are based on a small percentage of the total incoming and out-going orders. A current directory of all members is received monthly by each member.

OUTSTANDING FEATURES

The national advertising program and clearing-house operations are outstanding features of F.T.D. The popularity and increased sales of flowers-by-wire may be attributed to their comprehensive national advertising and cooperative promotional work.

For several years following its formation, F.T.D. had a monopoly on the service of telegraphing flowers. Later competitive associations were formed for this purpose. One which has had lasting success is Telegraph Delivery Service, which was organized in the early 1930's.

Telegraph Delivery Service is a privately owned corporation, with offices at 356 South Spring Street, Los Angeles, California. This company also furnishes its subscribers with a monthly directory. The subscribers to this service do not use a clearinghouse but remit direct to the receiving florists on all telegraph orders, deducting

their twenty per cent commission on each. This corporation also differs from F.T.D. in that it does not have a national advertising program aimed at public support of its service. The membership dues and fees are set at a modest figure and are not based on the amount of orders sent, as T.D.S. has no system for recording the sales made by its members.

A more detailed discussion of the methods of operation and merits of these organizations is unnecessary, because any florist interested may secure more information by addressing either of the headquarters offices.

CODE OF ETHICS

Retail florists considering affiliation with a flowers-by-wire service should realize that this business method can be only as good as the individual members. Membership qualifications should be examined carefully and rigorously maintained. Faulty handling of orders by any member should be regarded as a more serious offense than delinquency in financial obligations to the organization.

The damage done by one florist who cheats on wire orders and creates public distrust cannot be overcome by ten other member-florists who give unquestionably fine service. The unethical florist who shortchanges the recipient on flowers telegraphed lacks foresight and is ruining his future as a florist in the community. Also he is seriously injuring the reputation of the sending florist and planting seeds of distrust in the public mind on flowers-by-wire service.

Each wire order received is an opportunity for a florist to show a resident of his own community a sample of his work and still be paid for the effort. One of the great sources for new contacts and future business lies in this field. The person who receives telegraphed flowers which are well designed and of good quality will not soon forget the name of the florist who filled the order. Whether the order be large or small, the good will generated by that service cannot be underestimated. It is reflected also in the reputation of the sending florist and florists generally.

To maintain public confidence, florists' telegraph associations need

to be stringent in enforcing adherence to their codes of ethics. Undesirable members will have to be weeded from the ranks and more stringent requirements established to maintain a membership in the service.

EDUCATING THE PUBLIC

A surprising number of flower buyers do not understand the mechanics or principles of flowers-by-wire service. Many of them are of the opinion that the identical flowers selected and shown to them when they place their order will be delivered at the distant city. The salesperson should explain the facts simply to the flower buyer. Much of the dissatisfaction connected with telegraphed flower orders can be avoided at the source of the order by intelligent selling.

Every customer should be told that the flowers and prices might not be identical in other shops and cities. Price quotations in various markets are available to all florists, and any variation should be taken into consideration. Because of good salesmanship, more open orders are being sent by telegraph than ever before. The reputable receiving florist then can make the most of the dollar of the sending florist's customer and deliver appropriate flowers of the best value for the occasion to please all parties involved.

The sending florist should always be most cautious in making promises about the delivery and service available at a distant city. He never should promise a Sunday delivery unless his directory advises him that the receiving florist is open on Sunday. Nor should he expect unreasonable speedy deliveries on night letters and mail orders. If he must specify delivery by a certain hour, he should telephone the florist or send a straight wire allowing a reasonable time for delivery. Florists at smaller cities often forget the amount of time and expense it takes to deliver flowers great distances in large cities. When flowers must be sent to rural communities where there is no florist, ample time must be allowed for shipping the flowers from the nearest member-florist.

The minimum prices for various telegraph orders should be strictly observed by every member-florist. Irregularities and all complaints

should be reported promptly and necessary remedial action taken by the authoritative offices or committees.

TEST ORDERS

The F.T.D. organization has been sending test orders to various cities. Florists have no way of knowing when one of their orders may be a test order sent by the membership committee. Comparisons of workmanship, value and quality of flowers sent on these orders give valuable information on the qualifications and integrity of various members.

The flower buyer will place his wire orders with the florist in whom he has greatest confidence and that florist will in turn send the order to the florist he considers most reliable at the distant city. When he has no personal knowledge, acquaintance or preference at that city, he generally will send the order to the florist who has sent him orders in the past.

Florists generally are more insistent on sending their orders to the shops who are known for their good service and high ethical standards rather than blindly following a reciprocity formula.

The easiest orders to fill in any shop are out-going telegraph orders, and the highest net profit made on any orders coming into any shop are from that source. That should be a great incentive to all florist-members to secure a greater volume of that business in their communities. The florist can do so by filling all of his wire orders to the best of his ability and by giving substantial advertising and publicity to the flowers-by-wire service available at his shop.

ENCLOSURE CARDS

Many florists have special cards which they enclose with all flowers delivered on wire orders which might be worded as follows:

"These flowers were ordered by telegraph. We hope our efforts pleased you. If not, we would appreciate knowing it because we consider our telegraph orders an obligation to give satisfaction. When you have occasion to send flowers, locally or to distant points, our shop will be gratified to serve you."

This idea has proved itself in promoting good will. Asking for any criticism on the order shows the florist's good faith and gives him the opportunity to make any adjustment in case the recipient is not perfectly satisfied. For obvious reasons, insertion of this card is not recommended on funeral orders. The name of the donor or sender of the flowers on the enclosure card should always be followed by the name of his city and state to enable the recipient to identify the donor without question.

When an order requests a certain flower not available to the receiving florist, and he is obliged to substitute another flower, it is good policy to enclose a note to the recipient naming the flower ordered and explaining the reason for the substitution. Such thoughtfulness will save embarrassment to both florists and the buyer.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The rules of flowers-by-wire organizations may specify that the receiving florist mail an acknowledgment of the order to the sending florist promptly after an order is filled. Suggested postcard forms are available for this and generally used by the members.

In filling out these acknowledgment forms, members comply with their organization's rules by furnishing a meager abbreviated description closely approximating the words of the order. Such acknowledgments amount to little more than saying that the order was received.

Some florists have the feeling that a telegraph, mail or phone order deserves a more complete reply or acknowledgement. They describe the flowers in detail, the arrangement, the accessories and the time of delivery. Such acknowledgments really mean something to the sending florist. He in turn often forwards this worthwhile acknowledgment to his customer. Such thoughtfulness frequently results in that customer's requesting his future orders for that city being sent to the same florist.

Any florist who knows that another florist respects his orders sufficiently to take the time and effort to send a detailed acknowledgment will send orders to that florist whenever possible. That

florist will in turn receive an increased volume of telegraph orders at his city. As a result, through the number of contacts he makes in handling this business well, he is increasing his volume of local business. The florist who handles his incoming wires well is also remembered by the recipients when they have occasion to telegraph flowers. Although his profit on incoming orders is negligible, his business is made more profitable by the other orders this phase of his business creates.

The florist who is conscientious in filling and acknowledging orders for customers at distant places is undoubtedly just as reliable in all of his business dealings.

PROMPTNESS IMPORTANT

A casual check of the office records of out-going wire orders will reveal that about one in twenty orders are not acknowledged. Furthermore many of these acknowledgments are received too late to be of any real value. Acknowledgments of holiday orders are often received months later because the florists have been too busy to attend to that detail on time. If the task is worth doing at all, it is worth doing promptly and completely. The monthly statement of Western Union to a florist is as good a record of his outgoing orders as are the tardy and brief acknowledgments he often receives. A mere repetition of the order without more detail is a waste of time and postage. Every florist should be impressed with the obligation and good policy of voluntarily sending acknowledgments worthy of his workmanship and integrity.

It is difficult to comprehend why any mature person would knowingly slight any part of the important wire service of his business. If he plans to progress and remain in the business, selfish motives alone should dictate careful handling of telegraph orders.

TELEPHONE AND MAIL ORDERS

The telephone is being used more and more for the transmission of flower-wire orders. Aside from being a timesaver, it gives the florists an opportunity to furnish more detail concerning customers'

wishes. In addition, it serves as a confirmation that the other florist has the necessary flowers and can deliver the order in time and as specified. Should substitution of flowers be necessary, that detail can be decided on the spot and the sending florist's customer notified immediately. This method of ordering also prevents any misunderstanding concerning variation in flower prices in different shops and cities.

The advantage in sending orders by mail where a rush delivery is not required is in the saving of telephone or telegraph charges to the customer. Air-mail, special delivery letters are often used. A further convenience to the customer in this method is that he can personalize the flower gift by enclosing his own card with the order.

However, the mails should never be used when there is any doubt that the order may not reach its destination in ample time for delivery.

CONVENTIONS AND MEETINGS

Every member of flowers-by-wire services should take part in business matters and elections of his organization. It is his duty to vote and to express his ideas concerning the affairs of his organization.

The intelligent florist attends the conventions and meetings to take an active part in its affairs, and he enjoys the social activities as a secondary pleasure. If he is appointed or elected to an office or committee, he should serve to the best of his ability. Should that duty interfere with the efficient operation of his business, he should decline the office. Serving the organization in an official capacity has the distinct advantage of making his name familiar to the membership, resulting in an increased volume of incoming wire business if his personality and service warrant the patronage.

Few members attend meetings solely to "drum up" business for their individual shops. If they do so blatantly, that act in itself does them more harm than good because a clear-thinking florist does not succumb to such ballyhoo.

The social side of florists' gatherings should not be minimized. The association of florists in a friendly atmosphere leads to exchange

of ideas that are of great worth. Knowing other florists personally leads to closer cooperation and greater consideration for one another's welfare.

It is self-evident that the flowers-by-wire organizations can continue to serve the public well only so long as their members measure up to ideals of the service. More stringent requirements and more testing of each member's ability and integrity to maintain those high standards will be necessary as the industry continues to grow and develop in the years to come.

XXVIII * *Trade Associations and Publications*

TYPES OF TRADE ASSOCIATIONS

Most florists today are members of at least one organization formed by florists to accomplish various purposes and solve problems for their mutual benefit. The aims of these trade associations and the scope of their programs differ, as do the territories from which they draw their membership.

Some of the organizations are international, such as the telegraph organizations discussed in the previous chapter, while others are national, for example, The Society of American Florists, The American Carnation Society, or Roses, Inc. Many states have their own florists' associations drawing members from all branches of the industry. Other strong organizations are regional in scope and draw their membership from several states, such as the Southeastern, Northwestern, or Northeastern florists' associations. There are also a great number of local organizations.

Most of the associations represent all branches of the industry, although some are for growers of specific crops, such as roses, carnations or galadioli. The Wholesale Commission Florists of America, Inc., as the name implies, is an organization for wholesale florists only. These organizations of growers and wholesalers are valuable to the retail florist in many ways. In the field of research for the improvement of flower growth and distribution alone, they are doing a great service to the entire industry. Their advertising and publicity to promote the sale of certain flowers increases the sale of these flowers in all flower shops.

Some excellent promotional work has been done by national or-

ganizations, notable among which are Florists' Telegraph Delivery Association, The Society of American Florists, and Roses, Inc. Their advertising and publicity have been outstandingly successful, and the flower shows sponsored by the two last-named groups in various sections of the country have generally boosted flower sales substantially.

The progress and growth of the florists' industry in the past twenty years have been in part because of the unified efforts of florists working through their organizations. Because of this cooperation the industry is recognized by state and federal governments as an important cog in the economy. Even so, there is still much room for improvement and greater growth if the individuals of the industry will increase their interest and financial support of their organizations.

MEMBERSHIPS AND PARTICIPATION

No business today can be operated independently, because all rely on the assistance and cooperation of other businesses to accomplish their purposes. Every florist owes his own business and industry the widespread benefits to be derived from membership in his own trade organizations.

Today there is a noticeably free interchange of ideas within the industry, because florists have learned that such cooperation is a healthy method for the improvement and growth of their business and that of other branches of the industry. The exchange of ideas in informal discussion with other members at meetings is in itself a hundredfold more valuable than the nominal membership fees and dues in florists' organizations. One new idea picked up at a meeting or organization program may prove to be worth thousands of dollars to an individual.

Some florists still withhold support of their own trade associations and coast along by themselves, reaping many of the benefits of research and promotion without paying their way. They are the gate crashers who like the programs but do not want to buy their tickets. There are others who hold memberships but do nothing

more. They do not attend meetings or voice opinions before the group.

MEMBERS' OBLIGATION

Florists benefit by being active in state and regional associations and in the Society of American Florists, which represents all branches of the industry on a national scale. Being active entails more than the mere payment of membership dues. Attendance at the monthly meetings of local florists' clubs, at the annual or semi-annual meetings of state and regional associations, expressing opinions and exchanging ideas at these meetings, voting on matters of policy and elections, serving on committees and holding official positions should be considered a privilege and a duty, accepted willingly with pride in the work assigned as minimum obligations.

Every florist should be so interested in his trade organizations that he considers himself on the membership committees in an ex-officio capacity and acts accordingly. Florists who value trade associations with their own memberships are the ones to sell their fellow florists on the same advantages. That is the best way to build their organizations to full strength, completely representative and financially able to carry on their programs efficiently. The responsibility and work cannot be carried on solely by executive secretaries, officers and boards of directors, but must have the active participation and full cooperation of all members to be effective.

An urgent need of the industry is for more men and women who are willing to sacrifice part of their time to positions of leadership in trade associations. The man-power and latent abilities are available, but the enthusiasm often is lacking.

In some of the better florists' organizations, unselfish civic-minded florists have accepted the responsibility of leadership, with the result that petty jealousies and selfish office seeking have no part in the organizations. The progress made by these organizations is ample recompense to the individuals who have generously contributed their time and energy.

MEETINGS AND CONVENTIONS

The business meetings of most state and national associations are held at annual conventions at cities selected for the convenience of the members and the facilities available for their activities. The dates of these conventions are generally set a year in advance and are selected to avoid conflict with the meetings of other organizations of the industry.

The programs at these gatherings follow a general pattern, with time devoted to business affairs and election of officers, growers' schools and forums, meetings for retail florists and social events, such as banquets and dances.

State associations work with the departments of floriculture of their state universities and devote program time for faculty members of these schools for discussions of experiments, methods of growing, research, culture and business management.

In many states educational short courses are held at the universities once or twice a year for the benefit of florists of the state. The interest of florists in their state schools of floriculture increases year by year, and the florists' cooperation and influence in securing greater appropriations for these departments are resulting in broader courses of study and more research in floriculture at many state schools. Through their organizations, florists are giving expression to their ideas for necessary and valuable courses of study and securing their trained personnel from these sources.

When individual members of associations at meetings and conventions give more of their time to and prompt attendance at business meetings, their leaders will take more interest in the positions to which they are elected, and the business conducted will represent the intentions of the majority of members, rather than that of the handful of members who usually attend the regular business meetings.

The poorest-attended sessions of most florists' association meetings are those of a business nature, and the most heavily attended are

the schools of design and social gatherings. Judging the industry from that viewpoint, it would seem the members too often stress their interest in design schools and entertainment rather than the business side of their vocations. It is true that these things fulfill an important need, but florists today should also study other phases of their business.

By itself, all of the designing ability in the world will not keep open the doors of a florists' shop. Of primary importance are salesmanship, recordkeeping, promotion, advertising and business management, but, unless these subjects are covered along with a design school session, the attendance does not generally warrant the speaker's effort. Maybe florists, like all average individuals away from their shops at conventions, would rather be entertained than educated, but that will neither build strong associations nor improve shop operations.

With keener competition from other industries for the consumers' dollars and with the example of other progressive florists, it may be that florists will in the future give their attention to programs which are as vital to their operation as designing technique. That will result in more effort on the part of association officials in securing the best talent available for that purpose because of member interest and support.

REVENUE

Revenue to support association programs in addition to yearly membership dues and registrations fees at conventions is secured from wholesale firms which rent space to show their supplies and flowers, taking orders from florists at those meetings. In addition, these tradesmen are solicited for advertising in programs and requested to furnish materials gratis for demonstration purposes. They have been most willing to support their associations, but in many cases they find that their participation at conventions has been a losing proposition financially. They should not be criticized by the associations nor boycotted nor put under pressure when they do not feel justified in meeting all requests for the afore-mentioned purposes. These

firms should not be asked to do more for the association's welfare financially or otherwise than would any of the other members. Realizing that florists are their customers, these wholesalers will do all they can to maintain the goodwill of the industry they serve. They deserve patronage, as well as recognition, for their generous contributions.

Design artists, demonstrators and commentators of high caliber are available in every state, and their part on the program at every convention is done creditably and unselfishly. The spectacle of seeing artists create beautiful and practical flower arrangements on the stage, discussing their methods and answering questions, always makes an interesting session, which sometimes holds a full audience for several hours at a time. These sessions are becoming more and more worthwhile, because, in addition to teaching how to arrange flowers, they also teach how to sell them, price them and where to secure the materials needed.

LOCAL GROUPS

Local florists' clubs have much the same problems as state associations, with some added difficulties. Their meetings are generally held monthly and the programs must be planned to hold the interest of employees, as well as shop owners, growers and wholesalers. The most successful florists' clubs are those in which petty jealousies are lost in the keen feeling of friendly cooperation. These are the communities where florists enjoy seeing each other, where they freely exchange ideas and experiences and where they work harmoniously on group projects, such as flower shows, civic affairs, local promotion and group advertising. Where that kind of cooperation exists, the programs are worth while, and, contrary to the practice at many organizations' meetings, the florists are prompt in arrival, because they would regret missing any part of the program.

Among the numerous other projects which may be adopted by local associations are uniform store hours, cooperative advertising, flower and fashion shows, uniform credit policies with bad account lists available to all other members, group insurance plants, National

Flower Week, cooperative sales events to clear glutted markets, the establishment of clearing houses for flower donations rather than each florist making several individual donations annually for various benefits and charities, educational programs on the use and care of flowers, uniform handling of flowers for funerals and hospitals after meeting with their directors and associations to reach a procedure satisfactory to them and the florists, civic activities in conjunction with industrial, governmental, social and commercial groups, sponsorship of worthy students by furnishing scholarships in floriculture, cooperation with state and national florists' organizations by assisting them in obtaining statistical data beneficial to the industry and publication of news letters and bulletins for the members.

THE SOCIETY OF AMERICAN FLORISTS

The Society of American Florists and Ornamental Horticulturists was organized in 1885 and granted a charter by special act of Congress in 1901. The objects of the society are to promote the education of the general public and members of the florists' industry in the subjects of and for the scientific development of floriculture and horticulture in all of their branches. Because it is the one national organization which represents all branches of the industry and because it has proved its value in service and promotion through the years, every individual and business connected with floriculture should be familiar with its program.

The Society of American Florists, with executive offices at Chicago and Washington, D.C., represents florists in problems of national scope. The Washington office studies proposed legislation and rulings that would affect the industry in any way.

The Society originated and gave to all florists the slogan "Say It With Flowers", which continues as the theme of a nation-wide campaign of education to get the public to appreciate and use more flowers. It also established the National Flower Show from which has evolved most of the large flower shows, resulting in publicity worth millions of dollars.

Its regular publications, the *American Florist*, which prints money-

saving tax and business briefs, news items and advertising suggestions of practical value, and the Washington Newsletter, containing information and predictions on such subjects as taxes, transportation, inflation, wages, census, markets, etc., are worthy of careful study. The headquarters office is a clearing house for information on industry problems, including the counsel of the executive secretary to help solve members' problems.

Its services include advertising awards to encourage more national advertisers to use more flowers in their ads; a progressive public relations program, which is climaxed, by National Flower Week, an event of outstanding promotional publicity, and the Foundation for Floriculture, maintained to further research in new methods of growing flowers.

Its policies are formed, its business affairs are planned and its officers elected by delegates from affiliated associations. The funds of the society are sustained by individuals and companies who pay yearly membership dues paid by these affiliated organizations. The individual membership dues are based and calculated on a volume of business basis.

The S.A.F. has given tangible assistance to industry groups in the formation of cooperative advertising organizations, commonly referred to as Allied organizations. This service, with complete information concerning Allied groups now in operation and recommendations for procedure in organizing new ones, is available to any interested group.

ALLIED ORGANIZATIONS

Better business and more friendly relations prevail among growers, wholesalers and retailers in areas that have allied organizations. The fact that there are so many of these groups in operation warrants a brief discussion of their methods.

The primary object of allieds is cooperative advertising and promotion. The funds to handle these programs are derived from payments of members usually based on purchases and/or sales, whereby the grower contributes one per cent of his net returns, the

retailer one per cent of his net flower purchases and the commission man one per cent of his net commissions. The wholesaler, or commission man, acts as the clearinghouse, or collector, deducting one per cent from the growers' returns and adding one per cent to retailers' bills. These amounts plus his own percentage contribution are paid to the allied at regular intervals.

This system is both equitable and practical, although there are other plans which might be used. Administration of these sizable funds is handled by a representative board of directors and bonded officers. The larger, established allied have sufficient work to warrant the employment of a full-time executive secretary. These groups, some dating back to around 1920, exemplify what can be done by other groups interested in organizing similar cooperative advertising organizations. Once the organization becomes established its members will be thoroughly convinced that their dollars spent through the Allied make the greatest mileage in advertising.

It takes persevering enthusiastic leadership on the part of those first interested in forming their own allied to keep all members interested in the plan. Some may be interested only in newspaper advertising, while others favor radio and billboards. Advertising media may be varied from time to time to comply with the wishes of the members. Promotional programs which can be cooperatively sponsored by an Allied organization are innumerable.

The fact that there are a few florists, growers and wholesalers who refuse to join an Allied group should not prevent the others interested from going on with an Allied program, even if it does mean that the nonmembers get a free ride. In time the resistance might melt away, but, even if it does not, the minority objectors should never be allowed to block any cooperative effort and progress of the industry.

TRADE PUBLICATIONS

In addition to the monthly magazines published by telegraph organizations and the regular publications of other industry groups, there are weekly trade magazines available on subscription only to in-

dividuals and firms associated with or engaged in some branch of the florists' industry.

The widespread circulation of these magazines in the industry indicates their value and usefulness to subscribers. They are of vital importance in unifying and crystallizing the ideas and aims of the industry through their editorial, educational and news features.

The trade magazines are a florist's primary source of information pertaining to group activities, conventions, flower shows, new discoveries, experiments and ideas in growing, selling and marketing of flowers. One new idea gained from these printed pages may be worth a thousandfold more than the subscription price. One item advertised for sale may be the basis for hundreds of dollars additional sales or hours of labor saved.

Between their covers each week these magazines contain valuable information for the employees, as well as employers. Making the copies available to all employees, including growers, designers, buyers, salespeople, bookkeepers, etc., is good business practice. A habit of this kind may result in a more intelligent, better informed personnel.

These publications are not for distribution to the general public, and members of the industry should be cautious in seeing that copies are not circulated promiscuously outside of the industry after the publishers have been careful in screening their subscription applicants.

The advertisers in a trade journal, in addition to making it easy for a florist to do his buying, at the same time pay a large part of the cost of publication. Patronage of these firms also supports the magazine to provide a journal with better features and more news and information for the florists' industry.

The trade magazines are worthy of more than cursory, spasmodic reading. General improvement and progress can be made in the industry if its constituents continue to make more efficient use and careful study of the trade journals to which they subscribe.

XXIX * *Preparation and Care of Flowers and Accessories*

The care, handling and preparation of the stock of cut flowers and general supplies in a flower shop will substantially determine the degree of its success. So much can be lost or gained in this one phase of the operation that it merits careful study by every florist. One of the inherent risks is the deterioration of flowers purchased for sale. The right care of this perishable stock will prevent losses caused by spoilage and complaints of dissatisfied customers, providing the florist buys intelligently and does not overstock.

CUT FLOWERS

Growers, wholesalers and retailers should always keep in mind that cut flowers, even though severed from the plants, are living things. It is the responsibility of everyone in the trade to see that cut flowers are handled so that they reach consumers in the best possible condition, with as much useful life as possible left in the stems, leaves and blooms.

When a shipment of flowers from the wholesaler or grower is unpacked in a flower shop and prepared for display and sale, it requires prompt and gentle treatment. The flowers should not be permitted to lie around through the day, nor should they be dropped into pails of water without more attention, although the latter stops immediate wilting and is better than no treatment.

It is common practice to cut the strings on bunches of flowers, remove some of the lower foliage and trim the ends of the stems with a sharp knife, using an angle cut which gives the flower a larger surface through which to absorb water. The foliage of a flower must never be slighted. Perfect leaves and stems add immeasurably to the beauty and health of any flower, and it should

always be borne in mind by the florist that a flower's own foliage is most complimentary to it. This foliage must be protected carefully, both when flowers are trimmed and arranged.

The stems, foliage and flowers should be inspected for defects as they are being trimmed. In the case of roses, for instance, broken and bent stems are sorted out, and the marred, bruised and discolored petals and leaves are removed.

For the most part this procedure is satisfactory with all flowers except those which are often sold in bunches, such as sweet peas, daisies, violets, pansies, heather, pom-pom chrysanthemums, etc. For convenience in pricing and handling, the strings on these flowers are not cut, and all of the stems may be trimmed at once before placing them in water for display and sale.

Heavy, woody-stemmed flowers, such as chrysanthemums and rhododendron, take water much better if the stem is broken rather than cut. If the flowers then do not take water and remain crisp, the end of the stems should be crushed sufficiently to break the skin and cell structure, without rendering the stems too broken and useless. A small hammer or other convenient tool may be used for this. Cutting at a slant and splitting the stem a few inches up will serve the same purpose.

Some flowers, such as poinsettias, euphorbia and poppies, bleed, exuding a milky, sticky sap where they are cut. Searing over a flame or dipping in boiling water for several seconds when they are cut will prevent more bleeding. These flowers' stems should not be cut by the florist when they are received because the grower should have sealed the stems. However, when the florist does recut any of the stems in designing arrangements, each fresh cut must be seared in a flame or dipped in boiling water, using caution to keep steam from the foliage and flower.

When flower stems are trimmed, they should be placed into water promptly. If they are permitted to lie in the air, the fresh cut dries and reseals itself before being placed in water, canceling the entire advantage of trimming.

Flowers with succulent, water-filled stems, such as jonquils and

calla lillies do not require deep water to keep well, and any flower will keep in shallow water once it has been hardened for a few hours in deep water and cool air. The water level in stock vases should not be so high that the foliage of roses, chrysanthemums, snapdragons, etc., is submerged.

The florist does not generally concern himself too much about loss of water by absorption and evaporation in flowers for sale in stock vases, because he generally sells these flowers before much of the water is consumed. However, he is most conscious of humidity, temperature and drafts, because humidity under 60 percent, temperatures over 70 degrees and excessive drafts result in quick death to most flowers. Experiments have shown temperatures of 40 to 50 degrees and humidity as high as 70 percent to be ideal for the storage of most cut flowers.

Fresh water is essential. That also implies that vases and containers be clean. Limed, corroded, rusty and dirty vases are bacteria laden and should never be used for storage and display of fresh flowers. It is too easy in a busy flower shop to empty a vase of stale water and refill it with fresh water and flowers without first rinsing and cleaning it. The little time saved by that neglect will be more than lost in wilted flowers.

STOCK VASES

Stock vases with a smooth inside finish of glass or porcelain are preferred, because they are easier to clean. However, because of the loss through breakage, many shops prefer containers of galvanized steel or aluminum, particularly for the long-stemmed, heavy flowers, such as chrysanthemums and gladioli.

Stock vases which are slightly larger at the opening and smaller at the base are commonly used, because their shape allows more room for the flower heads and greater capacity without crushing or bruising the flowers. These vases are proportionately taller than containers used for other arrangements, because they hold the flowers more erect, thus conserving refrigerator and display space.

Overcrowding of flowers by forcing them too compactly into stock

vases is a common error. Crushed, bruised petals and broken flowers result in substantial losses every day in most flower shops. The primary cause of this might be the lack of adequate refrigerator storage, or buying of too much surplus stock. Additional breakage and loss results when the flowers are removed from the vases by designers and salespeople, because it is almost impossible to remove part of the flowers from an overcrowded vase or refrigerator unless the entire vase is removed and all the flowers are taken out at once. This involves too much work and time to be practical.

When a rush day requires more flowers than available storage facilities can accommodate without overcrowding, it is more economical to keep some of the more sturdy varieties of flowers out of the refrigerators. It should always be remembered that bacteria develop rapidly in stale warm water. Disintegration of stem tissue and wilting follow rapidly. When this occurs, the stock cannot be sold. Special flower preparations, such as Floralife and Bloomlife, are commonly used to keep water sweet on stock flowers, as well as on arrangements sold by the florist. These materials will aid considerably in keeping most flowers, especially roses and carnations, in an unfaded, crisp salable condition.

CORSAGE FLOWERS

The corsage flower specialties are fragile and easily bruised by too much handling. Gardenias, camellias, stephanotis, bouvardia and Fleur d'amour keep best packed in thin layers of moist absorbent cotton or in air tight cellophane containers, which prevent evaporation of moisture from the petals. Placing these flowers in the refrigerator as they come packed from the wholesaler is common practice.

Orchids of all varieties, gloriosas, eucharis, lilies of the valley and violets may be placed in small vials or bud vases of water for display in a refrigerator without a protective covering. Many florists keep violets wrapped in damp paper in a box, without placing the stems in water, while others use shallow bowls, with a one inch wire mesh covering to hold the bunches in place.

The small spray orchids, such as phalaenopsis, odontoglossums,

cymbidium, etc., may be left on the branch and placed in a bud vase until the individual flowers are removed for use. Hawaiian vanda orchids, which arrive with short stems, may be placed on a plastic mesh over a shallow bowl with the stems in water. A metal mesh is not recommended, because it corrodes easily and is likely to cause bruises and spots on the petals. Vandas may also be stored in their airtight cellophane package in which they are packed for shipping.

FOLIAGES

Cut foliages are assuming an increasingly important role in arrangements for homes, offices and clubs. As a result, the florist is selling and stocking a larger variety and greater quantity of these lasting greens. They are becoming more prominent in arrangements and designs combined with cut flowers. In some cases they predominate the arrangement, and in others they act as a pleasing background for flowers. Because of the long-lasting quality of most foliages and due to their wide range of texture, shape and coloring, they are popular with designers and housewives alike. Caution should be exercised to avoid the use of too much added foliage as a filler in combination with flowers, because it could easily spoil what might otherwise have been an effective floral arrangement.

It is possible with clever designing to do complete decorations using foliage exclusively for many occasions, such as dinners, teas, weddings, parties, funerals, personal adornment and home decorating. (See illustrations.)

In the accompanying illustrations can be seen good examples of floral arrangements using foliages exclusively. Illustration 10 shows foliage used in funeral pieces. On the left is a funeral spray, or door badge, of ti leaves, magnolia branches and clusters of variegated privet tips. On the right is a wreath of boxwood, with a cluster of heather.

Suitable for a console or buffet is the pewter bowl, shown in

illustration 11, arranged with spiral eucalyptus and dried pepper berries. A modern vase arrangement uses variegated privet with a cluster of magnolia foliage. Pittosporum and string smilax are used, in an oblong crystal bowl for a centerpiece. A ceramic heron figurine adds an interesting touch.

Most foliages used by florists in decorations and in flower arrangements and designs will keep well in packing cases stacked in storage refrigerators without water. These include huckleberry, salal, Oregon fern, woodwardia, magnolia leaves, ivy, camellia foliage, eucalyptus, leather-leaf ferns, pittosporum, holly, arborvitae, coontie, laurel, southern smilax, lycopodium, *Asparagus-plumosus*, acuba, privet, boxwood and many others. (Arborvitae, however, should never be stored in the cut flower boxes, because of the adverse effects on the keeping quality of the flowers.)

A few of the soft, leafy foliages, such as adiantum and string smilax, should be kept wrapped in damp paper in the refrigerator.

Heather, pepper berries, gypsophila, pussy willows, bittersweet and mistletoe will keep well in refrigeration out of water, but acacia should be kept wrapped in closely sealed cellophane bags. Stevia should be placed in water.

Croton leaves, galax leaves, ficus leaves, sansevieria spikes and ti leaves may be kept wrapped in cellophane or paper in the refrigerator, while soft leaves, such as caladiums and coleus, should be kept in water. A coating of floral wax on many of these foliages will prolong their beauty considerably when they are used in arrangements in average room temperature.

Many shops also stock prepared foliages which last indefinitely and are used primarily in outdoor wreaths and permanent home arrangements. Among them are treated magnolia leaves, oak foliage, wood roses, ruscus, cycas, cattails, galax leaves, skeletonized magnolia leaves and an innumerable variety of seed pods and grasses. These materials and others used for decoration, such as Indian corn, gourds, strawberry popcorn, etc., may be stored in dust-free cartons in any dry space in the shop.

SUPPLIES AND ACCESSORIES

The long list of supplies and materials used by florists was covered adequately in Chapter XVI entitled "Supplies and Inventory." The care and storage of this part of the stock in clean, orderly and convenient spots for use are essential. Deterioration of ribbons, candles, boxes and paper through carelessness will result in substantial losses. Dampness causes rust and mildew. Accumulations of dust on ribbons, paper and foils cause considerable spoilage. Resulting losses from these causes over a period of several years may mount into thousands of dollars.

Pottery, glassware, brass and copper containers and other items sold and displayed should be kept polished and dust-free. Every florist should be as fine a housekeeper in his workroom and storage room as he is in the front of his store for the apparent reasons of efficiency and the savings afforded.

UTILIZING WASTE MATERIALS

When trimming and sorting flowers and foliages, much of the so-called waste material can be utilized effectively. Flowers with weak or broken stems should not be discarded, but they should be placed in accessible vases of water. These flowers may then be used later in corsages and other designs in which stems are not used. The same applies to much of the foliage and buds removed from the lower part of the stems. This is particularly true of gladioli and carnations.

The careful designer at the worktable making various arrangements will lay to one side all leaves and usable foliage. These will be wired and taped at his leisure to be used in corsages, bouquets or other designs.

Flowers which have developed too far to be sold and utilized in designs may be used in clusters on the outside of packages and boxes as a decoration.

Some florists save Styrofoam scraps which may be crushed and used as snow in Christmas decorations. Candles used at weddings and other decorations need not be discarded as waste. A candle

trimmer may be used to reshape the tips to make make them serviceable as short candles for hurricane lamps and wall sconces. They may also be melted and remolded into various shapes. In case a florist is not interested in this, the burned candles may be given to Cub Scouts, Girl Scouts, churches or other charitable organizations interested in having them.

Good managers and designers are always alert to ways of saving and using everything in a flower shop, including shipping boxes, wrapping paper, and packing materials, such as cotton, shredded tissue, etc. They are always conscious of the volume and varieties in their perishable flower stock and try to use all of it before any loss occurs.

STOCK ROTATION

The stock in all flower shops should be rotated and sold rapidly. Every day a flower is kept in storage or on display shortens its life by just that much. A complete turnover every day is ideal, and many shops with a sizable volume are able to operate this way when their locations are closely adjacent to the wholesale market. This accomplishment can be achieved by careful buying. A good manager is able to gauge his needs accurately, and, if he is in close proximity to the market, he can replace sold stock on short notice.

That is not possible in localities where all stock must be shipped to the retailer, although the locations which do not have transportation facilities providing overnight service from the nearest market are rare.

A criticism which can be made of many florists is that of overbuying. The only excuses for buying more stock than can be sold in a day or two are miscalculation of anticipated sales or adherence to a policy of keeping a large stock for display and customer selection regardless of sales volume. Any shop which is consistently overstocked is one which is likely to develop a reputation for delivering inferior flowers with poor lasting quality. It is a situation which exists in too many shops. Eventually it will lead to a sales decrease.

The anxiety to have a large enough stock on hand to meet any request for flowers irrespective of sales potentials is foolhardy. That florist in rotating his stock is likely to be selling flowers three or four days old all of the time and holding his fresh stock back for later sales.

The florist who makes an occasional miscalculation on sales and is caught with excess stock on hand will avoid getting into this bad habit. Instead he will junk his excess deteriorated stock and forget the loss. He will keep his customers pleased by delivering fresh flowers always. His code of ethics and business policy are opposed to selling old flowers even at reduced prices, and his adherence to that plan will pay off in customer satisfaction. If every branch of the industry would doggedly hold to a policy of keeping old and "pickled" flowers out of circulation, everyone would gain ultimately in spite of losses occasioned by overbuying or overproduction.

The retailer is not the only offender. The grower may be guilty in holding flowers on the plant too long in the hope of securing better prices on a rising market. The wholesaler by "pickling" flowers and disposing of four-day-old flowers at a bargain or attempting to sell them as fresh stock is also doing the florist and himself an injustice. The intelligent florist will not buy this kind of stock and will return it promptly if it is delivered to him.

This subject has been argued many times, each branch of the industry accusing the other of being the real offender. Regardless of the blame, everyone connected with the industry can, by watching his own actions in handling and rotating stock, correct the situation and put an end to this unethical practice. The public will then buy flowers in any shop with confidence, replacing any skepticism in the customers' minds regarding flower freshness.

EDUCATING THE PUBLIC

The care of flowers by a florist is important, but equally vital to him is the treatment they receive after they reach their destination. One of the responsibilities of the retail florist and the industry as a whole is that of educating the public on the proper care and

treatment of cut flowers. The florist does much of this when he is selling flowers, but his message seldom reaches the recipient of the flowers. That is why he often attaches cards of instruction on the care of the flowers he delivers.

This alone is not enough. Most persons have only a vague idea of flower care and the keeping quality of different varieties. In all probability they might expect violets or gardenias to last as long as carnations or chrysanthemums.

The Society of American Florists through the efforts of its public relations committee has secured the publication of many fine educational articles on this subject in magazines and newspapers. Every individual florist and florists' organization can enlarge this program by supporting the S.A.F., but they should go further than this by instituting local educational programs on the care and treatment of flowers and plants. Allied organizations in printed publicity, advertising, moving pictures and lectures can do much to overcome many common faults and misunderstandings in the handling and treatment of flowers after they leave the flower shop. Even in paid advertising space, items of this kind, describing the characteristics of certain flowers and their uses, would do as much to increase the sale and appreciation of flowers as would an outright sales message.

XXX * *Care and Treatment of Pot Plants*

Flowering plants, commonly referred to as pot plants, are a substantial part of a florist's stock and account for an estimated one-fifth of the average total sales volume. Blooming plants are in great demand at holiday times for gifts and greetings. They are also preferred by many persons for any occasion when flowers would be acceptable. Homemakers choose them for colorful, decorative accents. Hotels, offices and clubs often purchase them for the same purposes. Their lasting quality far exceeds that of most cut flowers. The thrifty buyer often prefers pot plants for the sake of economy.

Florists who are aware of the demand and sales possibilities make this a profitable part of their business the year around, in contrast to others who emphasize pot plant sales only at holiday times.

Some florists ignore plants, because they simply are not interested in caring for them nor selling them, just as others from preference do not stock gift items and other accessories. Sometimes this limitation of stock is caused by lack of space for proper storage, care or display.

The sale of plants by a florist carries with it an obligation. He should know the names and varieties and how to care for them. This knowledge is as important with plants as it is with cut flowers. It is vital to intelligent salesmanship and customer satisfaction.

CARE OF PLANTS

Plants are too often the most mistreated part of a florist's stock. Much of this inattention arises from carelessness and lack of knowledge. This generally is not the case in retail shops which have greenhouses or conservatories, because those establishments are conscious of proper growing conditions and they have desirable conditions for care of the plants.

Pot plants would occupy a much more prominent place in the

business if more florists knew more about them and sold more of them because of the lasting satisfaction they furnish the buyers. The grower is criticized unjustly in many cases for the short life of blooming plants in the average shop, when the real fault lies with the florist who either lacks knowledge or is careless and places these plants in unsatisfactory shop conditions. The difficulty is caused generally by a too dry and too warm atmosphere, particularly in winter months when artificial heat is used.

Plants should be kept in the coolest, most humid parts of the shop. If the shop consists of one room, humidifiers can be used and the temperature kept near 65 degrees rather than 75 or higher. If humidifiers are not used on furnaces or radiators, the plants can be placed on gravel on large shallow trays containing water. Syringing of the plants with fine sprays of water twice a day is also advantageous in freshening the foliage, but caution must be exercised to prevent water-soaking the blooms. It also must be remembered that there are some plants whose foliage should never be sprayed.

WATERING

Improper watering is the cause of the greatest loss of pot plants, both in shops and homes. The question most commonly directed to the florist by customers is, "How often and how much must this plant be watered?" There is no set rule which can be followed, because humidity and temperatures vary greatly in different surroundings. No plant should be watered by a rule of thumb, such as two cupfuls every other day.

Overwatering is as detrimental as underwatering. No plant should be watered when the topsoil feels moist to the finger, and, in no case, should a plant be permitted to stand in water after the soil is saturated. Yellow leaves which fall off readily indicate that it has been overwatered.

Water much colder than room temperature is never good for a plant and may cause discoloration of some plant foliage with which it comes in contact, particularly on African violets.

Once a plant has been allowed to become too dry, pouring water on the surface will do little good, because the water will drain out of the pot from the cracked edges of the soil which has pulled away from the pot walls. A remedy is to submerge the entire pot in a pail of water until the soil is completely saturated. In no case should foliage or blossoms be submerged. This treatment is often necessary for hydrangeas, chrysanthemums, azaleas, cinerarias, primroses and cyclamens, which require more moisture than many other plants. However, even these plants can be overwatered, in which case the buds may droop and fail to open.

ATMOSPHERE

Direct drafts on plants always should be avoided. Poinsettias particularly are affected easily by direct drafts.

Most plants require considerable daylight. This factor is not so important to florists, because the plants should be sold from the retail shops before they have suffered too much from lack of daylight.

Plants are susceptible to changes of temperature. Many persons do not seem to realize that a plant can freeze—education in this regard is generally gained and paid for through sad experience. Prolonged low temperatures, even though not freezing, may be injurious to a plant. Excessively high temperatures are equally harmful. The retail florist must know and explain these factors to his customers.

FLOWERS AND FOLIAGE

With modern methods of pest control, the retail florist should expect and receive only clean and insect-free plants from growers. When that is not the case, he is justified in returning the plants, since reselling them to consumers hurts his own business.

Any florist who is unfamiliar with the care of a particular plant always should consult the grower about it when he makes the purchase. The information then should be passed on to the ultimate buyer by means of a note or printed card attached to the plant, if the care required is unusual.

Wilted and defective foliage and flowers should be snipped carefully from the plant. This will increase the vigor and improve the appearance of the plant. One dried bloom or brown leaf will mar the beauty of the entire plant, and, when detected by a customer, may prevent a sale.

Plants in full bloom or complete development are not desirable in a flower shop. One of the reasons a plant is purchased by the customer is for its lasting quality. Few plants in full bloom will last longer than cut flowers. For most occasions, plants which have more buds than blooms are preferable.

POPULAR BLOOMING PLANTS

A growing potted plant in flower has great appeal and beauty. Some varieties are practical and generally accepted as ideal gifts. Some require special care and handling whereas others do well with average treatment. There is so much that could be said about the culture and care of plants that entire books have been devoted to a single variety, such as the lily, violet, etc. More detailed information may be secured from the grower, and many written treatises and books on this subject.

The following alphabetical list comprises some of the popular commercially grown blooming plants with a brief description and a few pertinent suggestions regarding their use and care:

Ageratums, with their blue or white flowers, are used extensively as garden border plants and also in the flower shop at springtime, if they have been pinched by the grower, to make a bushy, colorful pot plant. Good light and average water and temperature make them a fine house plant which may later be transferred to porch box or garden.

Azaleas are exceedingly popular because of their wide range of varieties, colors, showiness and prolonged period of bloom. They generally are available from Christmas through Easter, and they keep exceptionally well as house plants, if the soil is kept moist at all times. Generous watering is necessary, preferably from the bottom of the pot. The average housewife does not have much success in keep-

ing azaleas from season to season, because hot, dry summers and ordinary room and garden conditions are not favorable to their re-flowering, except in a few areas of the country.

The African violets, or Saintpaulias, with their recurring deep purple, lavender, pink or white flowers are ideal house plants. They thrive best in a humid atmosphere, and they like plenty of water around their roots and not on their leaves. They should be watered from the bottom and not placed in direct midday sun, but given ample shaded light. They bloom intermittently the year round. New plants are easily grown from leaf cuttings. With the exception of mites, the Saintpaulias should not give much insect trouble.

Begonias are most satisfactory as house plants. *Begonia semperflorens* and other types bloom almost continuously. Foliage should be sprayed occasionally, and the soil should be kept damp but not wet. These plants will thrive if given a spot in the sunshine. Many of the old-fashioned varieties are sought for their beautifully shaped leaves with metallic colorings, but Christmas begonias are the most popular in a flower shop.

Tuberous-Rooted Begonias are not at all like other begonias. Their blooms range from small to as large as six inches in diameter and are camellia-shaped, with waxy petals, in many colors, some fringed, curled, single or double. The plants, while beautiful, do not thrive well in the average home and must be grown in a shady, cool, moist spot and wind-protected spot outdoors.

Bleedingheart plants may be forced into bloom for St. Valentine's day, and, because, of their name and the daintily shaped flowers, they are acceptable as gifts for that occasion. Later in the spring, the plants may be transplanted to the garden, where they will bloom each spring.

Calceolarias are widely grown and used as house plants. Their tropical pouchlike flowers, in colors from clear yellow to reddish-brown and in spotted variations, are unusual and interesting. They do well in a window, with not too much morning sun and out of cold drafts, with moderate watering—a little on the dry side. Water should be kept from the leaves to prevent spotting.

Calla plants, both yellow and white, are desirable for Easter sales. The yellow calla's regal foliage, with translucent spots, is as attractive as its long-lasting flower. This bulb plant keeps well with average watering in ordinary room temperatures.

Camellia plants, with waxy foliage and flowers in colors from white through pink and red, are sold occasionally by florists, but they are very difficult to grow under home conditions. The atmosphere of most homes and offices causes buds to drop. The soil must be kept moist at all times.

Chrysanthemum plants are the most popular of pot plants sold by florists from early fall through Thanksgiving. They are appreciated for their fine keeping qualities and the wide range of varieties and colors. They keep well in average room temperatures with moderate light and plentiful watering. A few of the forcing varieties are hardy and ideal for transplanting to gardens. Chrysanthemums are susceptible to a great number of pests, and, for that reason, growers and florists alike are extremely cautious about having these plants clean and insect-free when they are sent in from the greenhouses.

The *Cherry* plants, known as Jerusalem or Christmas cherries are bushy and, in the winter months, bear orange, red and green berries about the size of a cherry. They will not thrive in homes with illuminating or coal gas, which causes the berries to fall and the leaves to curl. Sudden chills or prolonged dry heat will have the same result. For that reason, drafty flower shops with gas heat are unable to stock them profitably. These plants should be kept in a fairly cool atmosphere. The leaves require frequent water spraying, and the soil must be kept moist.

Cinerarias are showy pot plants in late winter and spring, with large clusters of daisy-like flowers and large spreading leaves. They are available in a wide range of colors in solid or variegated shades, with the exception of yellow. The plants should be kept in a room not over 65 degrees Fahrenheit and placed just out of direct sunlight. The soil should never be permitted to dry out. When cinerarias are watered with too cold water, the leaves wilt temporarily as if dry.

The *Cyclamen* plant, because it is tricky to grow at home, has

lost popularity as a Christmas gift in many flower shops. The plant requires an abundance of water, preferably from the bottom of the pot, and a cool atmosphere. Drafts and gas fumes will cause yellow leaves. Because the average person has difficulty in keeping it in good condition for longer than a few days, it causes many complaints to florists. For that reason a number of florists do not encourage its sale.

Easter lily plants are, of course, the most popular pot plants for Easter sales. Their symbolism, fragrance and white waxen beauty make them ideal gifts at this time. At other times they have little sales appeal. The buds develop well under ordinary conditions and with average watering. Pollen should be removed from the bloom as it opens to prevent discoloration of the flower. The bulbs may be kept and transplanted to gardens.

Fuchsia plants, with their graceful, pendent flowers in many shades, most common of which is purplish-red, are available in the late spring and summer. If the customer intends to use fuchsia plants outdoors be sure to prescribe a shady location, with wind protection. These plants are susceptible to red spider.

Gardenia plants seldom develop well in a home. However, some buyers feel well repaid to have the fragrant white blooms and waxy foliage at home for a short time in the winter, even though the buds may drop before opening. The plants require a moist, warm atmosphere and a light location for flowering, but should never dry out, nor should they be kept too wet. Watering from the bottom is preferred, and daily spraying of foliage is recommended.

Geraniums are as popular as begonias for house plants and are available in many colors and varieties. They are desirable for leaf color, fragrance, lasting qualities and ease of culture. They should be kept in sunny spots. In temperate zones, they are grown commonly in porch boxes, gardens, patios and sunrooms.

Gloxinias, grown from tubers, have large bellshaped flowers of delicate texture and coloring and velvety, hairy leaves. They are splendid house plants if properly cared for. They must not have too much summer sun, and they will not tolerate water on the leaves

or crown; therefore, moisture should be supplied by filling the saucer under the pot with water.

Hyacinth plants, grown from bulbs, are desirable for their fragrance and beautiful texture in white and pastel colors. They are sold commercially from Christmas through spring. The plants should be delivered in bud, as the florets develop and fade rapidly in warm room temperatures. Extreme heat will cause weak, rapid growth, which will require staking to support the flowers. The bulbs may be replanted in the garden in the fall.

Hydrangea plants are among the largest-selling pot plants at Easter and Mothers' day in most flower shops. Their showy, large blossoms in all shades, including white, pink, blue and lavender, are long lasting. They do well in average daylight and must be watered daily. Rapid wilting results from lack of water. Florists should always inform buyers about this and tell them to immerse the entire pot in water to revive the plant if bad wilting should occur. In sections where the winters are not too cold, the plants may be transferred to gardens when the flowers have faded.

Iris occasionally is sold in pots, the Blue Dutch Wedgwood variety being the most popular at Christmas and late winter. Buds develop and bloom readily after they have started flowering in the greenhouse. They keep as well as other bulb plants and require the same care.

Daffodil plants, particularly the large King Alfred variety, are commonly sold by florists in the winter and early spring. They require much the same handling and care as hyacinths and other spring bulb plants.

Kalanchoe plants, with oval shaped, thick rubber-like leaves, bear clusters of small orange-red flowers on slender stems. They are available usually from early fall into late spring. These plants must not be overwatered, nor should the foliage be splashed with water. They thrive well in the usual dry home atmospheres and are attractive in foliage even after blooming. Some varieties are used in rock gardens and as border plants.

Petunia plants make their appearance in many shops at springtime.

Like lantanas, salvias, pansies, coleuses, dwarf marigolds and ageratum, they are most often used in basket and combination plantings for Mothers' day and spring gifts. These plants, as they develop, may be transplanted to porch boxes and gardens, and, for that reason, are popular spring purchases. The petunia is sturdy, flowers all summer and is available in many colors and varieties. It will withstand considerable drought and heat.

Poinsettias make up a sizable volume of the retail florists' Christmas sales. The red bracts are a Christmas symbol everywhere. The plants usually last about two or three weeks in a home and are used during the Christmas season for decoration. The plants are touchy, requiring a good light, average watering and a warm temperature of 70 degrees. Too much water or a slight chill will result in falling leaves and bracts. *Poinsettias* with pink and white bracts are sold, as well as the popular red variety. The white flowers seem to be the sturdiest and hold their bracts longer.

Primrose plants are in bloom from January to April. The flower clusters, in shades of pink, white and lilac, grow from a bushy cluster of oval or tooth-edged, hairy leaves. Many persons are allergic to the foliage of the *obconica* primroses, which may cause a severe skin irritation. The plants should be kept in a cool shady spot and copiously watered, with care to keep the foliage dry, as the leaves are likely to water spot.

Roses of many varieties forced in pots are satisfactory plants for spring sales. They often are chosen because they are ideal for transplanting to gardens. Baby ramblers, climbers and hybrid teas are most popular. They require good light, average temperature and watering and do well for several weeks indoors before transplanting to the garden.

Tulip plants, in a wide range of colors in both single and double varieties, are profitable and fast-selling items for florists in winter and early spring, particularly for St. Valentine's day. If sold in bud, they afford a week or two of pleasure under average home conditions. In a cool room, they will last much longer with conservative watering. The bulbs may be kept for fall outdoor planting.

DECORATION OF THE POT PLANT

Most of the flowering plants are sold by florists in clay pots, covered with foil or crepe paper, some with fancy, curled edges and cleverly flared designs, with ribbon and often with other decorative accessories. These decorations are generally applied before the plant is shown on the sales floor.

The decorative pot covering is usually conspicuous, glittering with foil and ribbon and in a sense detracts from the beauty of the plant itself. Ordinarily the pot cover is not waterproof, so that a plant when sold cannot be placed on a good piece of furniture without causing water stain. Flimsy foil and paper do not complement the beauty of flowers nor bespeak good taste and harmony with other accessories in the home. In spite of this the public buys decorated pot plants. The showiness of most pot trims appears to add to the dollar value of the merchandise.

This is one instance where florists might institute an educational program for their customers. In most cases a simple earthenware jardiniere would cost no more than the fancy temporary paper decorations. In addition, a saving of time and labor would be effected. The plant would thrive better and could be placed in any room on good furniture and would not detract from its furnishings. The plain clay pot, with a clay saucer, would also be in good taste, particularly adapted to porches, sunrooms, patios and rooms decorated in a peasant or colonial theme.

Some florists have tried to lead their customers to this choice, but with meager success, because they have not taken the time to do a real job of educational salesmanship. Therefore, the customary foil and ribbon-bedecked plant is generally chosen, regardless of price. There are persons who make this choice without thinking, because they are accustomed to the trimmed pot, and they prefer its showiness.

Illustration 7 shows an azalea plant in an inexpensive jardiniere, the simple clean-cut lines of which enhance the detail and natural beauty of the plant—in contrast to the other three, shown with foil and paper decorations.

PLANT CONTAINERS AND DESIGNS

The florist, in selecting containers and decorations for blooming plants, applies the rules of good designing pertaining to color, balance and line. Always remember that the container is an accessory to the plant and thus should not detract from the beauty of the flowers and foliage.

Plants from the greenhouse generally are in pots which are in good proportion to the size and shape of the plants. When a plant is transferred to another container in the flower shop, a pot of the same size should be selected. When the pots are decorated with foil and paper, they become greatly enlarged, often out of proportion to the size of the plant, as shown in illustration 7.

Some plants will withstand a great deal of handling and soil disturbance in transplanting without injury to the life of the flowers. This is particularly true of many of the spring bulb plants. It is wise, however, to consult the grower before tampering too much with the root growth of a plant.

Containers with saucers for drainage are preferred, because they help the customer in that he can readily water freely and can easily empty excess water.

Illustration 8 shows a variety of containers with blooming plants. The clean, red clay pots and saucers make watering from the bottom convenient for the primrose and cyclamen plants shown. The gray earthenware pot, with deep saucer attached, does not detract from the delicate beauty of the Coral Belle azalea. The white, cast-aluminum pot containing a begonia plant has a saucer into which excess water drains. The white wooden tub planted with geraniums and white begonias is ideal for the sun porch, whereas the brass jardiniere holding a clay pot of pink African violets would be suitable on any fine piece of furniture.

Blooming plants can be designed for attractive floral gifts to suit any occasion or setting. It is often desirable to combine several varieties in one container, if each of them requires about the same care and has the same lasting qualities. For example, the African



Illustration 1. Students learn by doing in class at Bright's School of Design

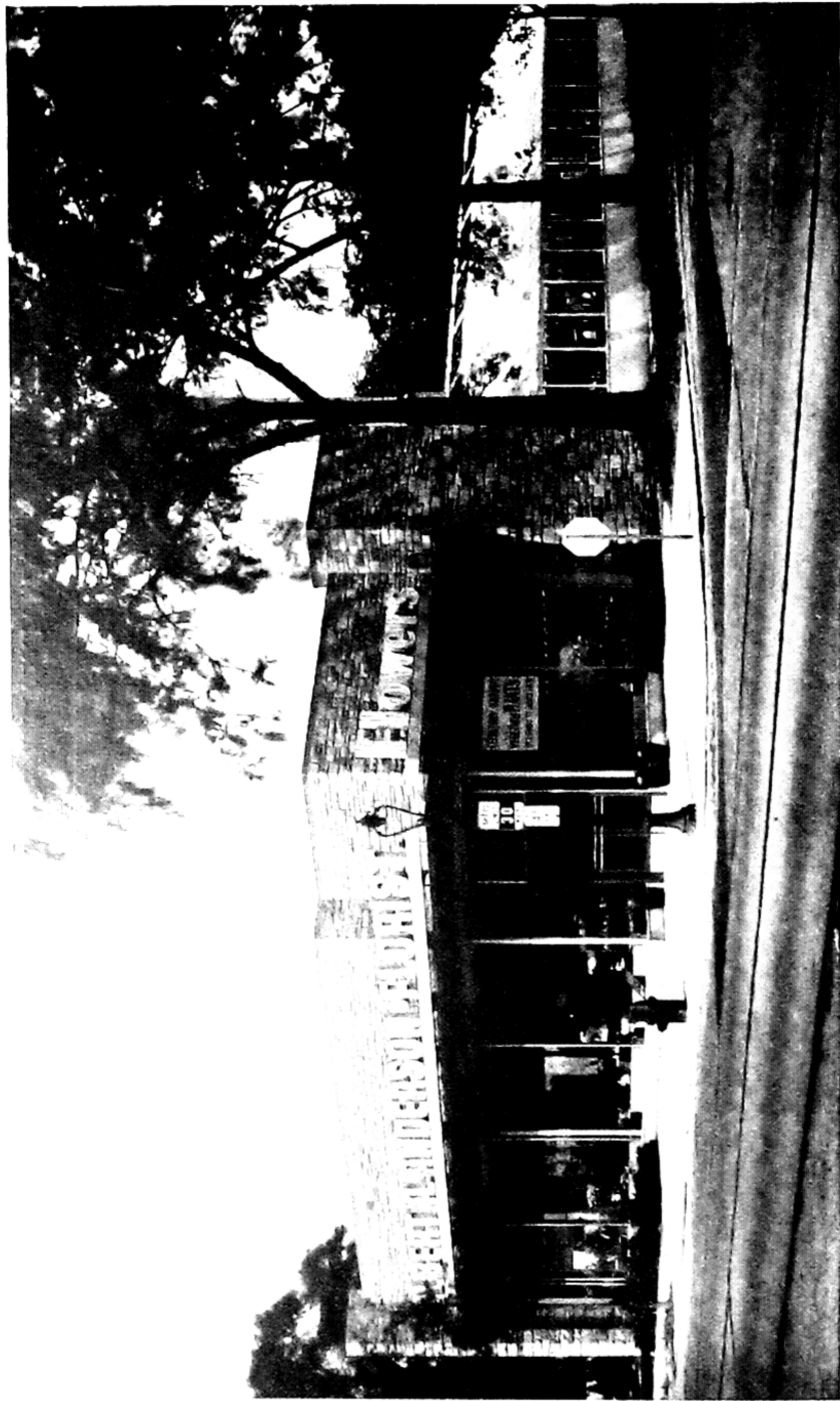


Illustration 2. Store and greenhouses combined in the establishment of Albert A. Anderson, Chicago, Illinois.

Valentine's



Illustration 5. Visual front at Valentine's, Jenkintown, Pennsylvania, makes the entire store a display window



Illustration 4. The open front of Harper's Flowers, Atlanta, Georgia, features a handsome sign, drive-in facility and protective canopy over the sidewalk.

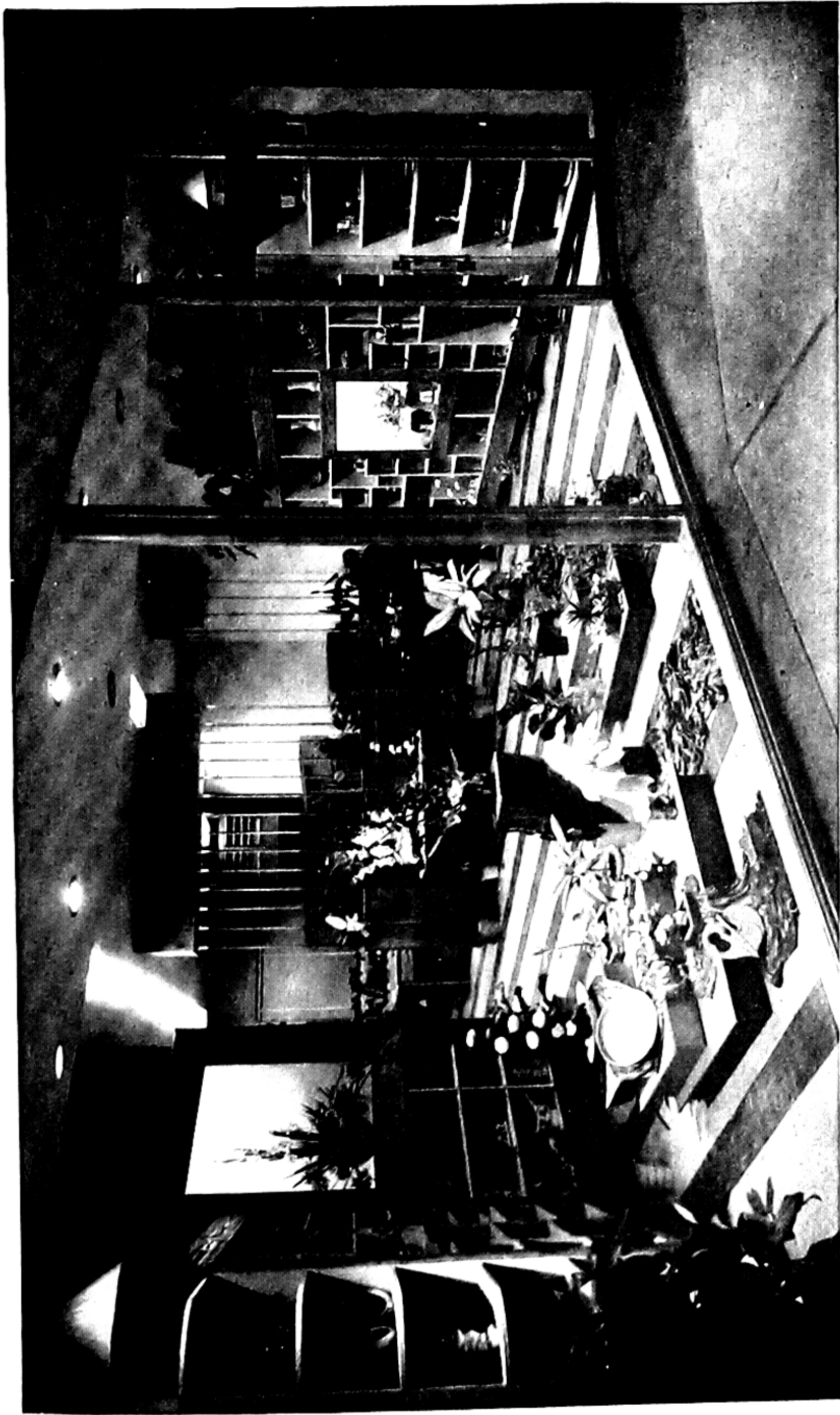


Illustration 5. The effective and efficient Village Flower Shop of the Chas. P. Mueller Floral Co., Wichita, Kansas, has a well-placed control center, open front and sales area.



Illustration 10. Funeral spray and wreath using foliage and heather exclusively.



Illustration 11. Left to right: Buffet arrangement of foliage; modern vase arrangement; arrangement of pittosporum and string amaryllis in a crystal bowl.

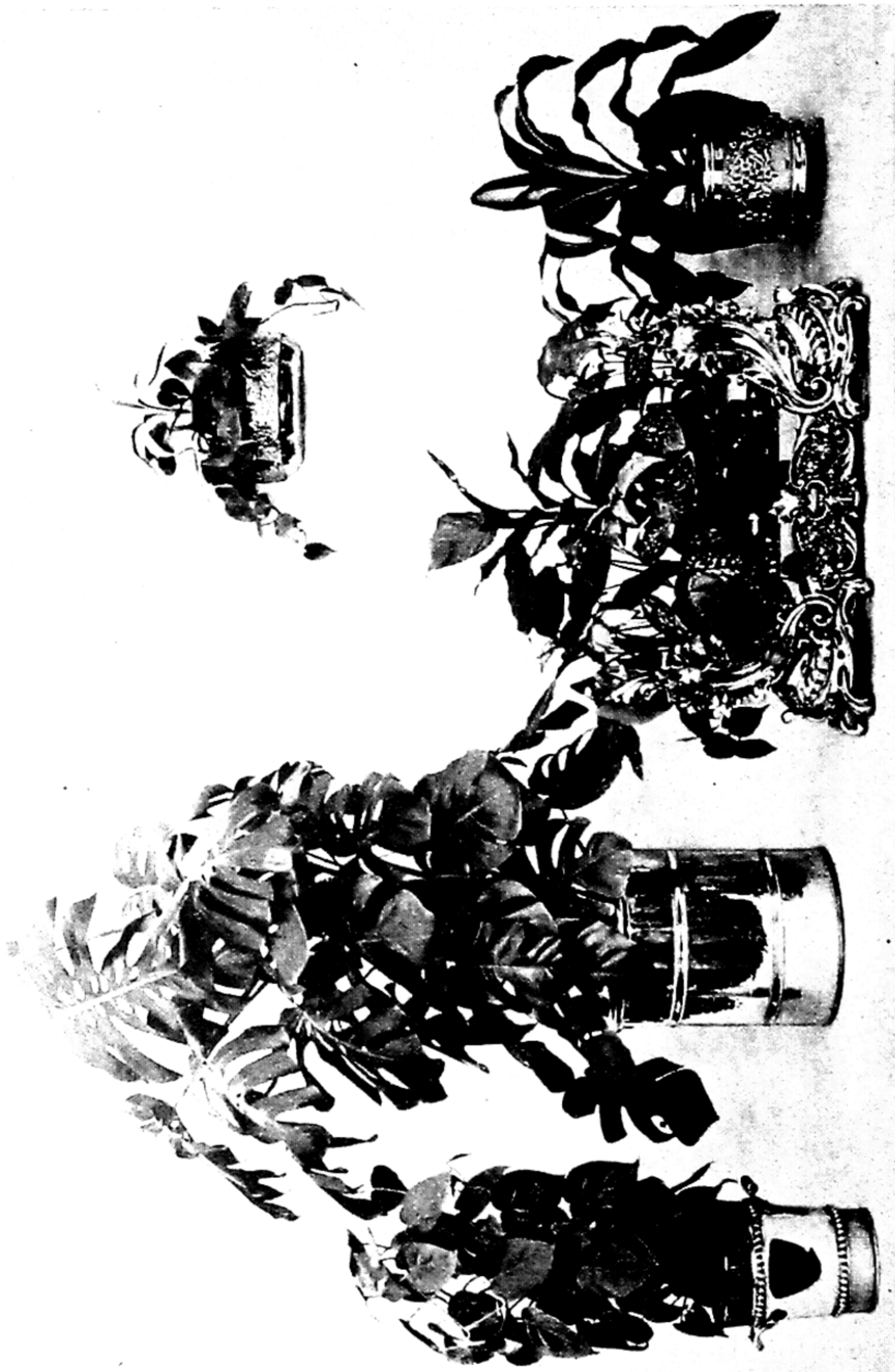


Illustration 12. Large foliage plants in brass containers and small plants in wall pocket.



Illustration 13. Assorted foliage plant arrangements in various containers sell readily and are useful in various settings.



Illustration 14. An assortment of floral items neatly wrapped in cellophane and paper, many with small nose-gays attached.

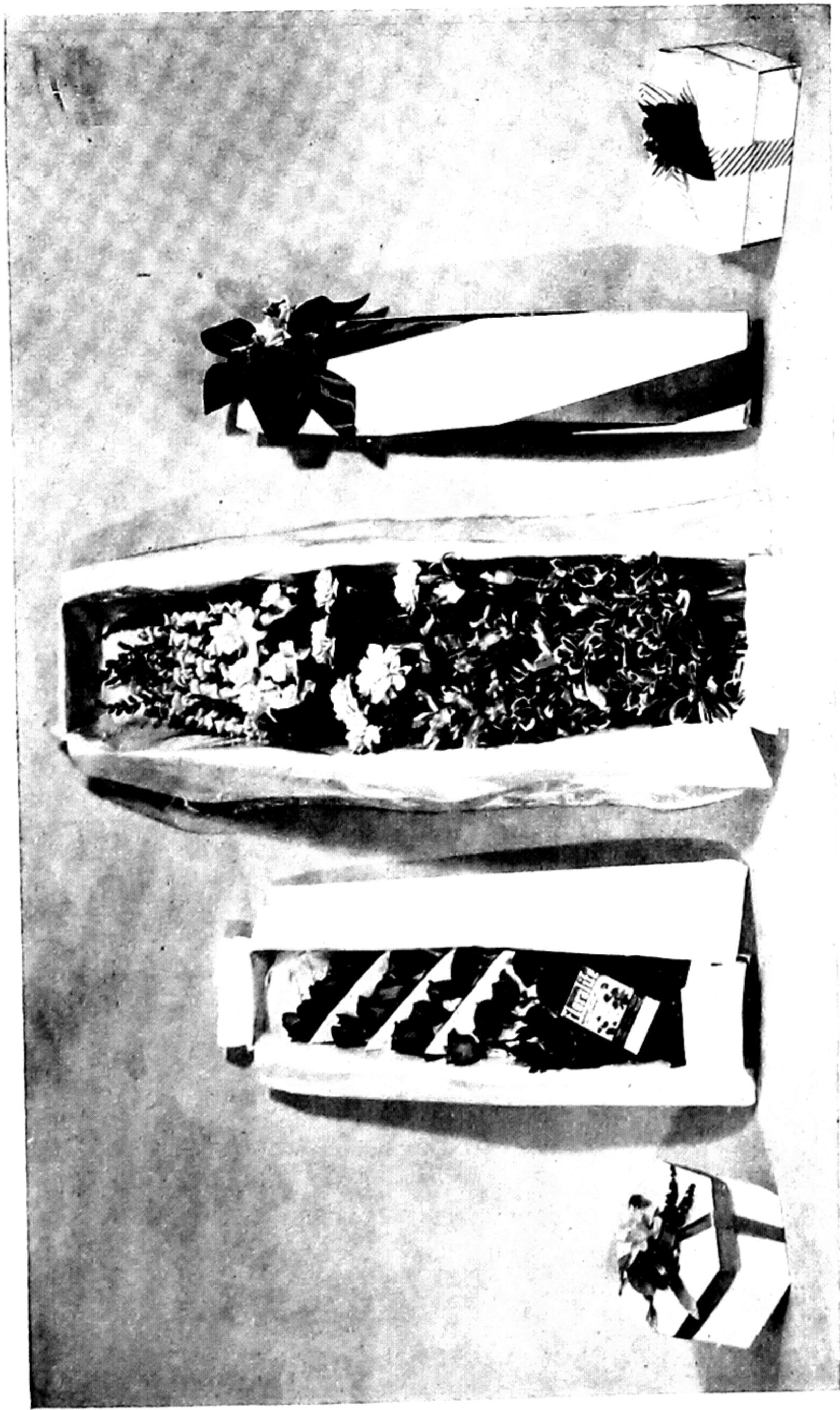


Illustration 15. Cut flowers packed for delivery in appropriately decorated boxes.

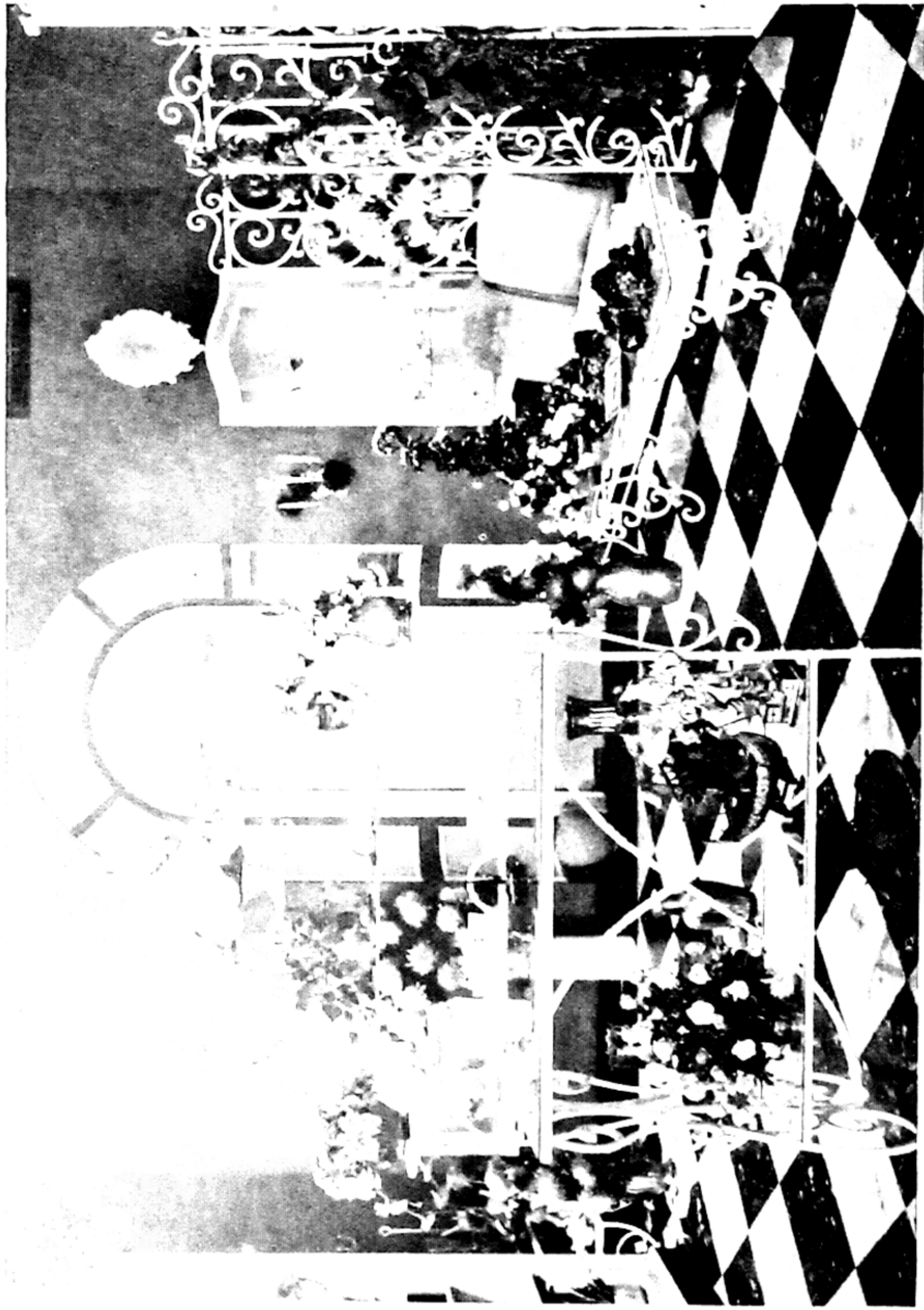


Illustration 16. Harmonious wrought-iron fixtures with floral displays in a portion of the author's shop, Kansas City, Missouri.

violet should not be combined with geraniums or bulb plants, because the care and longevity vary greatly.

Many combination plantings are made in containers without drainage, such as those shown in illustration 9. The utility and decorative effect of these containers offset the lack of any drainage facility. These plants will keep well in those containers if they are not overwatered. The low, yellow, glazed pottery bowl of yellow tulip and white primrose plants would be acceptable as a gift in any home, sickroom, office or shop. The reed basket, with metal liner, planted with hyacinths and daffodils with yellow and white tulips, makes a combination which could well be sent as an Easter gift, for a store opening, house-warming or any other occasion. Pink primrose plants in the footed milk glass bowl would continue to bloom for several weeks and could be used effectively for decoration in a variety of settings.

Combination arrangements of blooming plants are in great demand in the late spring, particularly for Mothers' Day, when the plants may be transferred to porches and gardens after they have been used for a time indoors.

Plants deserve as much of the designers' talents as do cut flowers. Florists, by using good judgment and artistry in arranging and selling plants, have the opportunity to increase their pot plant sales substantially.

XXXI * *Foliage Plants*

Foliage plants today are featured more frequently than ever before by architects and decorators in their plans for homes, offices, lobbies and institutions. Plants are chosen to enhance and give life to rooms which would otherwise have a cold, austere appearance.

Architects in their plans for new structures and for remodeling of old ones give consideration to a person's demands and desires to have something green, growing and alive as permanent parts of homes, offices or stores. Built-in window boxes, interior garden areas, islands, and ledges for foliage plants are common in these plans. The space allotted for these and the expense of installation indicate in part how much plants mean in the lives of people.

The attention given by nurserymen and landscape architects in planning and supplying the proper plant materials for outdoor areas might well be simulated by florists and growers to supply their customers with adequate foliage plants for indoor use. Meeting this need and demand for foliage plants for specific indoor purposes is but one more step in the direction of having plants and flowers considered as everyday necessities instead of occasional luxuries.

Some florists do not have the floor space or proper conditions to stock a variety of larger foliage plants. If they do not have the facilities or personnel to do more than small dish garden work in their own shops, they should be happy and consider it good for their own business to refer customers to other florists who deal in larger plants and who are equipped to do the type of work frequently required in their planting.

CARE OF FOLIAGE PLANTS

The same general principles discussed in the previous chapter on the care of blooming plants also apply to foliage plants. The treatment in the shop and the problems of humidity, light, drafts

and temperature, plus the necessity of educational selling, need not be repeated. Foliage plants are more permanent than most blooming plants, and, with proper care, the florist can stock them without the risk of loss caused by deterioration and spoilage persisting in blooming plants and cut flowers.

Proper moisture and drainage takes on added importance with foliage plants, because they are considered as permanent decorations and are kept until they outgrow their pots or become too large in proportion to their surroundings. In pots and containers which are waterproof and do not have drainage openings, a thick layer of gravel or broken pots should be placed in the bottom. Mixing some charcoal with this gravel is considered beneficial in keeping the soil from becoming sour and soggy. Many persons have the idea that a plant will not thrive unless a porous clay pot, with a drain, is used inside a jardiniere. That is not true, and there is just as much danger of injuring a plant in a clay pot by overwatering, unless excess water is promptly emptied from the jardiniere.

The sifted potted soil obtained from growers is suitable for practically all foliage plants, and the retail florist will find keeping a small supply on hand useful when it is necessary to transfer foliage plants to larger pots or containers of different shapes. Customers who have had foliage plants for several months seek the florist's advice on repotting and fertilizing. Generally these plants would not be benefited by either process. Good commercial fertilizers, some in convenient tablet form, are available and should be used according to directions. At the same time, many plants in homes are ruined by the use of too much plant food. In many cases when the plants are not thrifty, they need better growing conditions, not more fertilizer. When fertilizer is recommended, the plants should be watered well before and after fertilizing to prevent root burning. The florist should always suggest weak dosages of fertilizers as a further precaution.

Foliage plants do not require frequent soil changes and repotting. They generally thrive and make a better appearance in containers without too much soil capacity.

Some foliage plants, such as philodendrons, aglaonemas, nephthytis, dieffenbachias, pothos and ivy, will grow in water. The florist finds many occasions for their sale in decorative containers which would not be adaptable for planting with soil.

Foliage plants should be kept and displayed with glossy, dust-free leaves in attractive, neatly arranged settings. A wide variety of plant trays, display stands and racks is sold by firms which specialize in florists' fixtures. Some florists even have these features built into their shops. Daily inspection and care of the foliage plants in the shop brings profitable returns for the effort involved.

POPULAR FOLIAGE PLANTS

The following alphabetical list of foliage plants, with botanical and common names, furnishes a brief description and hints on the care and use of each variety. These plants, available in most sections of the country, are in general demand and are sold by florists:

Aglaonema, or Chinese evergreen, a medium sized house plant, has pointed deep green leaves (*aglaonema simplex*) which droop slightly, making a graceful, symmetrical plant. It is attractive alone or combined with other plants. This plant requires little sunshine and will grow in either soil or water. It requires regular generous watering and thrives best in a sandy soil. Another species, *Aglaonema commutatum*, has variegated leaves in pale and deep green tones. Because these plants can withstand extremes of moisture and shade, they are widely used indoors.

Artillery plant, or pilea, has fern-like foliage and minute red flowers. It thrives best with some sunlight and frequent heavy watering. Its lacy texture makes it desirable for daintiness in combinations with other plants. The tiny flowers on mature plants when placed in sunshine after being sprayed with water, will discharge pollen rapidly in machine-gun fashion, which trait gave it the name artillery plant.

Asparagus plumosus, commonly called asparagus fern, is not a fern at all. This fine lacy hair-like foliage is used in abundance as a filler with cut flowers. It also is grown as a bushy pot plant and

requires a rich, moist soil and medium light, without too much direct sunshine. *Asparagus sprengeri*, although not so fine-leaved, is better adapted to window planting and arrangement in hanging baskets. The foliage will turn yellow with too much heat or sun.

Aspidistra, or cast-iron plant, with deep green or variegated wide leaves shaped somewhat like those of a corn plant, is one of the hardiest of foliage plants. The common name, iron or cast-iron plant, describes its tenacity to thrive under most adverse conditions such as dust, drafts, darkness, wet soil, gas, etc. As the plant grows, it does not increase much in height, but spreads out, with new leaves forming at the base. It grows best in a rich, moist soil and requires very little light. *Aspidistra* is not used so widely as the equally hardy *sansevieria*, because it requires more time for propagation and is not available in so wide a range of varieties and dwarf species.

Aucuba japonica, or gold dust plant, is of medium size, with slender, deep green leaves with yellow spots. The plant is one of medium-rapid growth requiring regular watering to keep the soil on the moist side. The branches and leaves of this plant are often used as decorative cut foliage in the flower shop and may be purchased in bunches, particularly on the west coast markets. Established, well grown plants should be kept in small containers to allow them to become root-bound, or they will grow into too unwieldly awkward shapes for indoor culture.

Bromeliads, also known as bromels, are unusual and practical as house plants requiring a minimum of care. These tropical plants have gained popularity in recent years. They are desirable for their clean-cut, interesting forms and colors, and they are well adapted to both modern and period decorative schemes. In addition to the interesting foliage colors and flower spikes, on some bromeliads the rather stiff leaves are curled at the base to hold considerable water, making the plant a living vase in which cut flowers may be arranged. Aside from this novel attribute, the plant is ideal as a colorful, hardy house plant. The bromeliads are epiphytes, or air plants, and thrive on the rain water they catch in their leaves. They are

easily cared for in the home, and moist soil is used mainly as a support for the plant, but the cups at the base of each leaf should be kept filled with water. Bromeliads will grow well in situations where the light intensity is low. The mother plant dies about a year after blooming, but usually is replaced by new side shoots.

Cacti, succulent plants, are generally characterized by their thorny leaves and stems. Their curious forms make them interesting in small, indoor rock garden combinations. Some varieties, such as the night-blooming cereus and Christmas cactus, have flowers of delicate texture and beauty. Cacti, native to arid lands, require limited watering, except when in bloom. They require good drainage and a sandy, loam soil, and, contrary to common belief, they thrive better in cool rooms than at constant high temperatures.

Caladiums, or elephant-ear plants are grown from bulbs. The large, shapely translucent veined leaves in a wide range of beautiful colors make them acceptable as pot plants by themselves or combined with other flowering or foliage plants in the house or garden. The foliage remains attractive for several months. The bulbs may be stored indoors and kept dormant in the winter. Fancy leaved caladiums grow best in a shaded spot during the summer months and should be watered regularly without ever permitting them to become very dry.

Coleus, a bushy foliage plant of beautiful variegated colors, is grown easily from cuttings or seeds. The plants are prized for their color and are commonly used for porch boxes, garden borders or in pots for indoor use. The plants should be pinched to make them bushy. They are used by florists generally in combination plantings, particularly for Mothers' day and Easter. They do best in a sunny location with average watering. Coleus will also grow in water.

Crassula, or jade plant, Chinese rubber plant, is one of the most popular of succulent plants and it is easy to grow. This tree-shaped plant has thick, glossy oval leaves. With proper culture, the plant may grow to two or three feet in height in several years. Older, well grown plants bloom in the spring, with a myriad of small, fragrant, white flower clusters. The crassula grows in either sunshine

or partial light in an average sandy soil mixture, with adequate drainage. Too much water is generally the cause of dropping leaves. Like other succulents, the plant should be allowed to dry out thoroughly before rewatering. The small plants are ideal for dish gardens. Propagation is generally by leaf cuttings. *Crassula aborescens* is used extensively, because it is more adaptable to adverse conditions than other succulents.

Dieffenbachia, or dumbcane, is a handsome, erect, large-leaved plant, which is slow-growing, and requires average warmth, plenty of moisture and medium light, but no direct sun. Its lower leaves will become discolored if it is chilled or watered too little. The plant also will grow in water for a long time. *Dieffenbachia picta* is a commonly grown species, which has leaves flecked with greenish-yellow. The variety, *Rudolph Roehrs*, has pale, creamy, veined translucent leaves and is exceedingly popular and decorative.

Dracaena, or corn plant, is a graceful, erect, slow-growing house plant. The slender, long leaves curve down slightly at the tips and are variegated and striped in color in some types. *Dracaena* grows best in a warm, humid atmosphere but keeps well in the average home in semishade, with regular, thorough watering. *Dracaena fragrans* and the *Massangeana* form are types best suited for the home. *Dracaena derimensis Warneckii* has slender, deep green leaves with white stripes. *Dracaena Sanderiana* is a dwarf variety, with pale-edged leaves ideal to use alone in small containers, or in combination with other foliage plants. Any florist interested in plants should certainly put the dracaena near the head of his list, because of its durability and interesting varieties which may be used in many effective combinations.

Echeverias, or hen and chickens, are succulent plants, with thick, smooth gray leaves clustered in rosettes. There are many species, with a wide variety of shapes and colorings. Like other succulents, they require good drainage and not too much water. The plants are ideal for miniature indoor rock gardens and in combination with other succulents and cacti.

Ferns have lost popularity as house plants in the last two dec-

ades, because of their exacting requirements for high humidity, cool temperatures, not much sunlight, good drainage, daily watering, rich soil, syringing, trimming, etc. *Maidenhair* fern, one of the most beautiful, is also about the most difficult to grow. Its fronds are universally used by florists where dainty foliage is desirable. The *Boston* fern and the more lacy variety, *whitmani*, grow into large plants with careful culture and proper surroundings not often found in the compact home of today. *Leatherleaf*, a smaller fern, will thrive in a drier, warm atmosphere. Holly fern, with glossy, crimped, strong fronds, and the dainty *rabbits-foot* fern are also small and more adaptable to home culture. Small table ferns, *pteris* varieties, are used widely in miniature window gardens for their daintiness and interestingly marked, lobed and cut fronds. *Bird's-nest* ferns have waxen smooth, uncut leaves, but they cannot be recommended to grow well under average home conditions.

Ivy or English ivy (*Hedera helix*), is one of the most widely used vines for home, for porch box or for ground cover. English ivy will grow well even under adverse conditions, but moderate, indirect light and regular watering are needed for luxuriant growth. English ivy prefers a cool atmosphere and a heavy soil mixture. It is relatively slow growing and is propagated from cuttings. Ivy also can be grown in water. Syringing the leaves once a week will help keep it free from dust and red spiders. Varieties such as *Hahn's self-branching* ivy are in great demand, because they grow into bushier plants with smaller leaves than the species. *Maple Queen* is another popular bushy variety.

Marantas, prayer plants or arrowroot plants, are semitrailing with oval-shaped leaves of varying color. Some are purplish, pink or gray underneath, with the face of the leaf green or blotched in deep shades. At night the leaves fold their upper edges together. *Marantas* should be kept moist, in a warm room and shaded from sunshine in hot weather.

Nephtytis, arrowhead or emerald gem, is a fast-growing plant, with arrowhead-shaped leaves. Some of the plants are erect, while other varieties are vining. They grow in soil or water, without di-

rect sunshine. *Nephtytis* propagates easily from cuttings and may be cut back when it becomes too tall or long. Some slower-growing varieties have variegated leaves with white markings. Except for the dwarf erect variety, *nephtytis*, as it grows, needs some support, such as stakes, mossed or bark poles or trellises.

Ficus, or rubber plant, with large, glossy, rubbery leaves, is an erect plant of fairly rapid growth. It requires regular watering, warm temperature and a good light, but sun is unnecessary. The leaves should be washed occasionally to keep them sleek and clean. *Ficus Elastica* is the most commonly grown species, although *Ficus Pandurata*, or fiddle-leafed fig, is more handsome, with larger curved undulating leaves and conspicuous veins. *Ficus* plants should be given light applications of fertilizer every month or so to keep them beautiful. Where a large, upright plant is needed, one of the *ficus* varieties is generally a good selection.

Palms are extensively used for decorations in hotel lobbies and churches. Most varieties, such as the *kentias*, are tall and massive but graceful. Sunshine is not desirable, but moderate light is needed to keep the plants active. Frequent syringing of the foliage is necessary. *Palms* thrive best in moderate temperatures near 60 degrees and in moist soil. A smaller variety *Roebel palm* or *Phoenix Roebeleni* is lacier in appearance and better adapted to decoration in the average home.

Pandanus veitchi, or screw pine, has leaves frequently more than two feet long, edged with spines and often striped with white and growing in a spiral pattern from a central stem. The strong roots generally lift the base of the plant above the soil, which is a natural characteristic of its growth. The plant does not grow rapidly and requires only average care. Large plants are used for a fountain-like effect in large urns, with other small plants surrounding. Smaller specimens are used in dish gardens and planted center-pieces.

Peperomia obtusifolia has round, fleshy leaves and is a small, attractive, bushy house plant requiring average conditions and care. Overwatering will cause rot at the base of the plant. When growth

becomes rank, the branches may be cut back without injury to the plant. *Peperomia argyreia* has striped leaves and is aptly known as watermelon begonia. Both species are desirable and practical foliage plants.

Philodendron is the genus of a great variety of familiar and useful vines or trailing plants, which probably are used more for home decoration than any other foliage plants. They are ideal for that purpose, because they do not need direct sunlight and do not become easily infested with disease or infested with insects. Philodendrons need average watering and grow moderately fast. Cutting back does not harm plants, and propagation is by cuttings. The vines may be supported or permitted to trail on shelves or from pots in brackets. *Philodendron cordatum*, with its heart-shaped leaves, is the most common variety. *Philodendron pertusum* has large round leaves, which are cleft in divisions and look as if holes had been cut out. This variety, along with those carried in the trade as *erubescens* and *hastatum*, which have heavy arrow-shaped leaves, usually is grown with a pole for support sometimes as tall as six or seven feet. *Philodendron dubia* has large graceful, deeply cleft leaves almost like a palm or fern, whereas *trifoliatum* has long stemmed, pointed leaves, which grow in groups of three. *Philodendron imbe* also has a heart-shaped leaf, but is much larger than *cordatum*. All of the large-leaved varieties have a tropical, exotic appearance, but they respond to average room conditions better than most foliage plants. In any spot where a plant could be utilized effectively, a philodendron in one of the many available sizes or varieties would be adaptable.

Pothos, or devil's ivy, a vining plant native to Malaya, is much like the philodendron *cordatum* but a bit more heavily textured. It requires the same care. *Pothos* also will grow in water. *Pothos aureus*, often referred to as variegated philodendron, has leaves of shining green, splotted with creamy-white or yellow. *Pothos Nilens* has a plain green leaf.

Sansevieria, snake plant, lucky plant or mother-in-law's tongue, a

tropical African plant, with stiff sword-shaped leaves, will grow under almost any condition except freezing. It grows well with little or no direct sunlight, light watering and dry atmosphere. Because it is so hardy, it is in such common usage in hotels, shops, lounges, etc., that many people avoid the plant in spite of its sturdiness. *Sansevieria laurenti*, with its bands of yellow in the leaf, is an unusual form. Many other varieties, some dwarf, some with tiny rosettes and others broad-leafed clumps, are particularly adapted to dish gardens and sell best when combined with other plants.

Saxifraga, or strawberry begonia, is an old-time variegated foliage plant, with scalloped round leaves and slender stems. The leaves are green-veined, white on top and a pink strawberry color beneath. It is ideal for small hanging pots or baskets. The plant does not grow rapidly nor require special care. Like the strawberry, in the spring it sends out runners, at the tips of which tiny new plants appear.

Schefflera has bright, dark green leaves which grow in groups of three on long slender stems. It is seldom infested by insect pests and will withstand considerable handling. Its upright, graceful foliage is well suited to combining with vines in urns and brackets. *Schefflera* requires a moderate amount of water and light.

Shrimp plant, (*Beloperone guttata*) is a small-leaved plant that puts out bracts of distinctively colored, pink, overlapping bracts formed like shrimps, drooping from the end of each stem. The plant is rooted from cuttings and requires sunshine and plenty of water. It blooms several months in the year. Because of its interesting color and form, it is an eyecatcher in any plant arrangement.

Succulents are a group of dwarf plants, including cacti and other desert plants such as agaves or century plants, crassulas and echeveria. Botanically, this group includes more than 2000 species and varieties. Many are grown commercially and used as house plants. As long as they have good light and are kept fairly dry, they keep well. They are attractive for their variety of form, texture and color.

Syngonium has variegated arrow-shaped leaves, which are deeply cut. It is a small, slow-growing plant, which thrives best in a warm, humid spot, with plenty of water.

Tradescantia, or wandering Jew, is a hardy, fast-growing trailing plant, with small leaves, which thrives in soil or water. It is available with green leaves or purplish, bronze toned colorings. It propagates easily from cuttings and grows with ordinary care in average room conditions.

Vitis vine, or grape ivy, *Cissus rhombifolia*, is a satisfactory bushy, vining plant, which adapts itself well to average home conditions. The waxy, veined, saw-edged leaves grow in groups of three. The hairy, pink leaf buds and tendrils add to its beauty. It requires average watering, a good light and not too much heat.

SELLING FOLIAGE PLANT DESIGNS

The possibilities for greatly increased sales of foliage plants in every flower shop are innumerable. A good designer who knows about these plants and their care can create attractive and lasting arrangements which will sell on sight. Plant designs cannot be visualized nor appreciated by verbal description only. It therefore behooves florists to display some attractively arranged plantings and not just a miscellany of assorted individual foliage plants in a rack. The latter type of display sells some individual plants for home use, but seldom does it appeal to the buyer in search of a lasting gift.

To sell foliage plants intelligently, the florist should be thoroughly familiar with the names, particular habits and care of all plants he has in his shop. In addition, he should know where the plants are to be used, so he can honestly recommend those best suited to the atmospheric and decorative surroundings.

The markets abound in a great variety of pottery, glass and metal containers commonly referred to as planters. Many of these are inexpensive and are sold in quantities by other stores as well as flower shops. Florists, by selecting unusual containers for plants and displaying them already planted, have the advantage of selling the container and plants as a unit. This field for additional sales can

be developed with plants, as it has in many cases with cut flowers.

The plant arrangements shown in illustration number 13 are a fair sample of items which sell readily in flower shops. The Italian pottery urn is planted with schefflera and philodendron and might be sold singly or in pairs for mantle, buffet or console table. The jumbo cup and saucer of heavy earthenware with a fruit design is planted with variegated peperomia and dwarf sansevieria. This is a popular gift item and may be used in many informal settings. The low square crystal bowl holds dieffenbachia and pothos growing in water. These plants are impaled on a heavy pin holder and would be appropriate in a modern home as a centerpiece for dining table, buffet or coffee table. The oblong footed brass piece is planted with variegated ivy, dracaena sanderiana, sansevieria and philodendron. It could be used in the living room or library. The goblet or chalice of colored glass is arranged with variegated Chinese evergreen Aglaonema commutatum and Philodendron cordatum in water, with glass pebbles to hold them in place. It would be appropriate in almost any setting where a graceful tall arrangement is desired.

Foliage plants are employed also for wall decoration in brackets, hanging baskets and on shelves. Illustration 12 at the upper right shows a brass wall pocket planted with dracaena sanderiana and Philodendron cordatum. Also illustrated are a number of brass containers with larger plants. At the left, the wine cooler holds a totem pole arrangement of Philodendron cordatum. The second plant is a tall Philodendron pertusum supported on a bark pole. The third illustrates how an oblong brass box may be arranged for andirons as a summer fireplace decoration. This plant combination consists of aglaonema, dieffenbachia, nephthytus and philodendron. The fourth is a footed brass jardiniere holding a Dracaena massangeana.

Every customer should be told how to care for the plants he selects and advised candidly what he may reasonably expect from them. In too many cases, the buyer is oversold on the possibilities and lasting qualities of plants. This practice leads to complaints and dissatisfied customers.

Every florist must have a definite policy in handling of complaints

on foliage plants. It is impractical to make unconditional guarantees, unless the florist plants and places them and also furnishes regular maintenance on a contract basis.

It is not unusual for customers to bring their pots of foliage plants to the flower shop every three or four months for replacements and rearranging. Many persons seem to prefer doing this, instead of giving more careful attention to their plants. Frequent replacements are also required in instances where plants are kept in rooms without proper light and temperature. Sometimes plants are knowingly kept in a wrong environment because a certain texture and design are desired for a particular spot.

Florists can sell more foliage plants and feel confident of the satisfaction the lasting beauty will afford, but only when each sale is conscientiously and intelligently handled.

XXXII * *Packaging and Prepackaging*

The influence of attractive packaging as a sales stimulus and prestige builder is being proved daily on the counters of all merchandising firms. The accepted and general use of beautiful wrapping materials and gift wrapping services is also an indication of the appreciation and desire for handsome packages. Recognizing this, many merchants offer their customers this service without additional charge. In spite of the substantial increased expense incurred for gift boxes, ribbons, papers and labor, they are convinced that beautiful packaging is a good investment, evidenced by repeat sales, good will and word-of-mouth advertising.

Keen rivalry exists among manufacturers of all kinds of merchandise in the packaging of their products whether they be candy, cosmetics, tooth brushes or electric blankets. The beautiful appearance of the package frequently results in the quicker sale of an item over an even better product not so attractively wrapped.

The florist's product has high intrinsic eye appeal and, with attractive packaging, can have the added value of being remembered for its handsome wrapping, although the primary function of packaging or wrapping is protection of the flowers. More thought is being given by florists to the appearance of packages that leave their shops. They know, too, that the package and the arrangement of the flowers within can enhance the beauty of the flowers themselves.

The impression made by the outside wrapping is an important and lasting one. Just as the personality and attire of the delivery man, or the appearance of the delivery truck or the clothes of the salesperson impress those who see them, the package, which is handled and opened by the recipient, leaves in his mind a definite favorable or unfavorable reaction toward the shop from which it came. The progressive florist will do all that he can in making the appearance of outside wrappings do justice to the beauty of the

flowers inside. The fragility, perishability and beauty of the florists' product certainly deserves the best of materials and attention in packaging, if florists are to keep abreast in the competition with other merchants for the consumers' gift dollars.

PACKAGING MATERIALS

The list of wrapping materials in general use by florists is by no means a negligible item in the inventory of his supplies. Included in that list should be an ample supply of the following: Cut flower boxes, corsage boxes, kraft wrapping paper, wax tissue, florists' tissue, cellophane, cellophane bags, transparent acetate boxes, decorative stickers, labels, shredded tissue, cotton, Scotch tape, gummed tape, tying tape, twine, clips, staplers, ribbon, excelsior and newspapers for packing and insulation.

BOXES

Boxes for corsages and cut flowers are used by florists everywhere as the best medium for packaging. The heavy cardboard, knock-down or folding boxes are wax-lined. The outside finishes are available in a wide range of colors and materials, the most common being a highly glazed paper coating. Florists' boxes are usually imprinted with the name and trademark of the shop and frequently include the street address and phone number.

Box manufacturers, cognizant of the needs of florists, have improved their methods of creasing, pressing, printing and finishing florists' boxes on sturdier fiber board. The florist should select the type of box which most nearly fits his particular requirements. The shop which operates on a price policy may use inexpensive one-piece folding boxes, whereas a shop which adheres to a service policy might select 2-piece highly glazed boxes with full telescope lids. All sizes are available from the smallest boutonniere box to the extremely large container for designs and long-stemmed flowers.

Considerable savings may be effected in quantity purchases through price discounts and reduced rates on printing and shipping.

Many florists carry in stock more than one grade of corsage and

cut flower box. The finest boxes are generally used for more expensive corsages and cut flowers. They may be had with cellophane window tops, or with gilt foil lining and covering. Well made collapsible corsage boxes in hexagon shapes, with a band trim on the lids, are popular. Completely transparent acetate boxes are effective for fancy corsages and bouquets.

Unusual novelty boxes suggestive of holidays are appropriate for corsages and small bouquets. There are boxes shaped like hearts for St. Valentine's day, hats and eggs for Easter or top hats for St. Patrick's day.

WRAPPING PAPER

A variety of wrapping paper on rolls with cutters should be conveniently placed in the flower shop workroom. White florist's tissue, twenty-four inches wide is practical for wrapping small flower arrangements and plants. Soft, green, waxed tissue, on rolls or in sheets, is recommended for lining cut flower boxes and protecting fragile flowers from bruising. Heavy kraft paper in different weights and widths should be used when wrapping large arrangements and plants, to protect them on delivery, for insulation against heat and cold and for wrapping items which are to be shipped.

Fancy, colored papers imprinted with the florists' trademark or multicolored patterns appropriate to different seasons are eye-catchers and well worth the small additional cost.

Clear waterproof cellophane is a most valuable and effective wrapping material. For beauty, visibility and insulation against heat and cold, there is no more satisfactory packaging material than cellophane available to the florist. The multiple uses of cellophane, in addition to wrapping floral arrangements, plants and novelties, makes it a must on any florist's list of supplies. It is more economical if purchased by the pound on large rolls to fit a paper cutter.

PACKING FLOWERS

The care taken by a florist in packing flowers inside the box or wrapping is an important determining factor in the perfection of

their condition when they are opened by the recipient. Flowers should be so arranged in the package that no damage can occur in their handling while they are being taken to the destination. Overcrowding flowers in a box can easily mar the petals, spoiling the beauty and effect of the entire order.

When wrapping or packing flowers, the florist should always bear in mind outside weather conditions, the approximate time the flowers will remain in the package and the mode of transportation. It is always wise when handing a box of cut flowers to a customer to advise him at which end of the box the blooms are located so as to prevent injury to the flower heads if the box is tilted or set on end. Most florists have their own particular methods of wrapping flowers. A uniform procedure should be adhered to in every shop, so that all employees who handle the package will know how the flowers are packed within the box. For example, the design or printing on the lid of the box might indicate which end of the box should be considered the top.

The time spent in placing and arranging flowers beautifully and carefully within a package is time well spent, as the mental impression of the purchaser or recipient as the box is opened is a lasting one. A carelessly arranged, tangled group of flowers will certainly leave a bad impression and mar the appreciation of the bouquet. Some florists exert every effort to prevent this, while others pack their flowers hurriedly, with little thought of appearance and arrangement.

Some progressive florists place doilies or folded tissue between the rows of flowers as they are placed in the box to prevent the stems from becoming tangled and to keep the flowers from being bruised. Illustration 15 shows a box of sixteen medium and short-stemmed roses carefully arranged in a box lined with white florists' tissue. In the same illustration is a bouquet of snapdragons, daffodils, iris and carnations placed in a box with enough depth to prevent any of the flowers being crushed when the package is closed. In that case, a sheet of clear cellophane lines the box to give it an added touch of freshness and extra insulation against heat or cold.

Many florists use a fine mist spray of water over flowers when they are packed to furnish sufficient humidity within the package, giving the blooms a dewy freshness. Practice varies in flower shops on the inclusion of added foliages and fillers with flowers at no additional cost. Notwithstanding the custom in many communities of including a generous amount of extraneous greens, such as asparagus, huckleberry or salal, most flowers require little filler in addition to their natural foliage.

It is becoming general practice to include a package of Bloomlife or Floralife with all cut flowers at no additional cost. These flower preservatives have more than paid their own way in customer satisfaction.

Many of the flower arrangements delivered by a florist in his own delivery truck do not need to be wrapped for their protection in mild weather. This is particularly true of funeral designs, hospital bouquets, table decorations and plants. The necessity for wrapping is obviated in all cases where flowers reach their destination in perfect condition without it. Certainly that is not possible when the delivery car is drafty or overcrowded or the outdoor temperature is extreme.

The proper wrapping of flower arrangements and designs requires considerable practice and consumes a great deal of time. This is particularly true in the winter months, when several thicknesses of paper are necessary to prevent freezing of the flowers when taken from the truck to the recipient. Aside from being protective and neat in appearance, this wrapping must be so placed that none of the flowers inside will become disarranged or broken. As the paper is brought around the flower arrangement and tightened, each of the flower heads must be up to prevent the stems from breaking or bending in the package.

Some flowers, such as the Easter lily or poinsettia, are so fragile that it is advisable to wrap each bloom in wax tissue before fastening the outside wrapping on the plant or arrangement. That same precaution is also advisable when packing large chrysanthemums to prevent falling petals or bruising when removing them from their

wrapping. Small squares of cellophane or waxed tissue are practical for this purpose.

In wrapping spreading arrangements, such as centerpieces, it is often difficult to keep the weight of the paper from resting on the taller flowers in the arrangement. In that case, a cane stake, slightly taller than the uppermost flowers, placed in the arrangement will support the paper wrapping and keep it from resting on the taller blooms.

Corrugated boxes in many sizes with a considerable depth are often used by florists in packing arrangements and plants. The delivery man removes them from their wrapping and checks the arrangement before leaving the destination, taking the carton with him for future use.

It is obvious that any arrangement or design which could be injured in jostling or sliding around inside of a box, should be amply secured to hold it in place. For instance, if a corsage is pinned to the cellophane bag or conservette in which it is placed before being boxed, it will not become bruised while the box is en route. Many fragile flowers, such as orchids should be carefully placed on a bed of finely shredded paper and then completely surrounded with fluffs of the same material to keep them in position. A corsage pin through the stem into the base of the box can also be used to hold a corsage in place.

In all cases, it is advisable to line any box with florists' tissue, cellophane or wax tissue for appearance, as well as for the flowers' protection. It is not necessary in every case to use a box. Many customers prefer taking their flowers with them in a closely wrapped bundle for speed and convenience. Sometimes the customer will say, "Please just put a bit of tissue around the stems as I am going home directly." This should not, however, be an excuse for careless handling in wrapping, nor should it be done if the flowers require more protection from the elements. A brief word of explanation in this regard will be appreciated by any customer regardless of his rush to be on his way.

By observation, the retail florist can gain considerable information

on the proper packing of flowers from growers and flower shippers. Steady progress and improvement in packing flowers for shipment by air and express to retailers all over the country have been made over a period of years. A casual glance at flowers being unpacked will furnish clues to the best methods.

Wholesalers and growers alike realize the great importance of careful packing and handling of their flowers en route from the benches and fields to the retail shop. They have developed methods of boxing, sealing and insulating so accurately that it is now possible to ship flowers across country by air in perfect condition. Rapid transportation, without the technique of proper packing, would not have been a great asset to the industry.

Retail florists owe their customers the same careful attention in packing flowers for delivery. A few moments of bad handling of flowers can make them a complete loss. Every branch of the industry is conscious of the great needless loss caused daily by careless packing.

PACKAGE DECORATION

Every flower package deserves the few added touches that can be given to make it outstanding in comparison to any ordinary article of merchandise. A ribbon tie or piece of tape neatly looped, a few pieces of foliage or flowers properly placed can do the trick in a moment's time at a nominal cost. Even a seasonal sticker or colorful label can do much to enhance a package's appearance. A tiny sprig of heather or small cluster of flowers tied or clipped to the card enclosure envelope can make an outside wrapping so appealing that it will attract the attention of everyone who sees it and make the recipient eager to see the contents. Shown in illustration 15 is a gift box of cut flowers, tied diagonally with satin ribbon, in the bow of which are a flower and a few sprigs of foliage. The folding corsage boxes are ribbon-tied and also flower trimmed.

In trimming packages with flowers, one different from those enclosed should be used on the exterior for reasons of surprise and greater appreciation of those enclosed. The color of the box and the

printing thereon will necessarily influence the florist in his selection of the decoration and its placement.

In illustration 14, a varied assortment of items is shown with different wrapping materials. The great value of cellophane and transparent boxes as an appropriate wrapping for flower arrangements is apparent. The added touches of ribbon, foliage or flowers make an attractive finish. The use of stickers on the packages wrapped in heavy paper, along with their flower trim, make them more appealing. When a colorfully patterned wrapping paper is used, stickers would be superfluous except to promote or advertise some civic event or campaign.

In no case should flowers be wrapped in soiled or wrinkled paper. It should always be borne in mind that the cleanliness, neatness and beauty of the outside wrapping will impress the recipient and reflect proportionately on his opinion of the artistry and prestige of the florist. The appearance of a florist's packages can well be one of his best ads. The slight cost of these materials, taken as a part of advertising expense, will undoubtedly bring the greatest return.

PREPACKAGING

Prepackaged flowers in recent years have been the subject of more discussion, experimentation and conjecture than any other topic pertaining to the florists' industry.

The floriculture department of Ohio State University, after detailed experiments under the direction of Professor Alex Laurie, engaged in a thorough research on marketing prepackaged flowers. Several large firms of wholesalers and growers are prepackaging on a good scale today. The progress of these pioneers is being watched closely by all branches of the industry.

The principle of prepackaging, as summarized by Ohio State University research, is based upon arresting the respiration, transpiration and metabolic rate to retard maturation of cut flowers. This is accomplished by sealing the flowers in a limited space under high humidity, and the carbon dioxide given off by the cut flowers increases in concentration in the enclosed atmosphere and retards de-

velopment of the flowers. The maturation is further retarded by storage at temperatures of 38 to 42 degrees Fahrenheit.

The most satisfactory materials for packaging are a cold water waxed paperboard tray, overwrapped with heat-sealing Du Pont MSAT 84 or 86 cellophane.

To date roses have been used more than other flowers in prepackaging. If the roses are kept in a temperature of 38 to 42 degrees Fahrenheit, the process will increase the selling period to a maximum of five days. Chemical processes occurring arrest the development to such a degree that the reaction of packaged roses compares favorably with fresh cut roses. If the roses are not delivered to the customer in the original cellophane sealed box within that time, they must be hardened off before use, after which time they can be used satisfactorily for at least two more days by the florist for arrangements and make-up work.

It has been established that prepackaged flowers will last longer in the store, as well as in the home. It requires less effort and space to handle them. The transparent package has definite sales appeal and makes possible a definitely lower markup by eliminating added handling, box cost and waste. Prepackaged flowers add to customer satisfaction, because bruising and breakage are reduced to a minimum.

Prepackaged flowers may be the solution to the industry's objective to make more general the everyday use of fresh flowers in the home. In a survey made by Ohio State University, florists admitted that less than three percent of their gross sales were accounted for by flowers purchased for home use. The other ninety-seven percent was composed of funeral work, special occasion buying, hospital arrangements, etc. The issue facing the retail florist resolves itself to this: Will he grasp the opportunity to make prepackaged flowers for home use available to his customers at low prices, or will he permit other merchants, chain stores and the like, to handle the distribution of prepackaged flowers?

The sale of prepackaged flowers in the flower shop will not infringe on the ninety-seven percent of his gift and special occasion

sales. On the contrary, it might increase that volume through impulse buying done by customers who came in primarily for prepackaged flowers.

The only way to develop the sale of prepackaged flowers is to make them as available as the magazines on corner newsstands and at prices much lower than gift flowers and designs. The florist located in a shopping district could profitably operate a department for prepackaged flowers on a cash-and-carry basis, but, in fairness to the product and his customers, he should insist that the price markup be kept as low as possible, preferably at a margin well under fifty percent, which is considerably less than the margin on sales which involve other service features, such as designing, packing, delivering, etc.

Price is an important factor in the sale of any product for everyday use. The producers or wholesalers who do prepackaging may in time establish set prices on standard packaged units of flowers. In other lines of business that is common practice on name-brand items. If the producers contribute substantially to advertise packaged flowers, they should rightfully decide the selling prices. Advertised low prices on prepackaged flowers would certainly be helpful in selling a greater quantity of them. Unless florists do this piece of merchandising properly, other merchants probably will take advantage of it, and the growers and wholesalers who furnish the prepackaged flowers will be justified in selling that product to them.

Assuming that the retailer receives properly prepackaged fresh flowers promptly after sealing, he need have no fear in selling and recommending them to his customers unless he holds them more than five days. Time and experience in the next decade will tell whether florists have taken the sale of prepackaged flowers seriously or whether they have permitted this excellent product to slip into other channels for merchants who see real profits in volume merchandising at low profits. If more flowers can be sold through prepackaging at the curb and in stalls on busy streets, florists should be the merchants who sell them.

XXXIII * *Designing*

The designer in a retail flower shop employs many of the same principles used by the painter at his easel. They are both artists when their work meets the requirements of the general principles which apply to their designs. Some successful artists intuitively employ these principles in their work without having given them conscious study, whereas others from observation and experience achieve good results, without having in their own minds any definite ideas of the reasons for their success.

It is probably true that only a few of the floral artists in commercial shops today could discuss intelligently many of the basic principles they apply to their work, such as line, color, balance, composition and unity. They have learned through practice and experience what designs are good. They recognize good design and are able to copy it, but find it difficult to explain why.

This situation exists today because most of us studied designing at a work table by reproducing flower arrangements which we had seen in illustrations, design books or demonstrations at florists' conventions. As long as the result is good, it is not too important how it was accomplished. However, the work of any floral designer, whether neophyte or experienced, would become vastly more interesting and original if the general principles underlying the art of good design were understood.

For the purposes of this discussion, it is not possible to go into great detail on the subjects of line or basic form, color, balance, etc. Special treatises on these subjects may be found in public libraries and book stores. Outstandingly fine illustrated books adapting these principles to floral artistry have been written by J. Gregory Conway, Patricia Easterbrook Roberts, F. F. Rockwell, Esther C. Grayson and others.

Every florist and designer should have a general knowledge of these subjects to enable him to judge with confidence the design work done in his own shop. With that background, he also will be a better salesman, with intelligent answers to customers' problems at his fingertips when discussing flower arrangements for specific settings and costumes.

Every design must have purpose, without which it is meaningless and useless. The clock that does not keep time, the pen that does not write or the portrait that is a poor likeness are all purposeless. The same is true, too, with the floral design which does not suit the occasion nor the surroundings for which it is being designed, nor which does not carry the message and meaning intended. In other words, no design is good without a purpose.

FORM

The forms of floral design are as numerous as the geometric lines and curves of the architect. Some of the geometric terms used to describe various forms of floral design are as follows:

1. Vertical or perpendicular
2. Horizontal
3. Pyramid or symmetrical triangle
4. Asymmetrical or Scalene triangle
5. Circular, round or oval
6. Hemispheric or radiating lines
7. Crescent or semi-circular

Many other terms may be employed to describe forms of floral design. The Hogarth curve, known as the line of beauty or lazy S, and others could all be placed in one of the triangular classifications, because the outline, in spite of the curves used, would coincide approximately with the lines of an irregular triangle.

Every arrangement on the designer's worktable can be classified as to form. For instance, the bud vase with one or two flowers—vertical; the low, long centerpiece—horizontal; the tall balanced centerpiece for a tea-table—pyramid or symmetrical; an irregular vase arrangement, asymmetrical; the colonial bouquet, a round vase arrange-

ment or a wreath—circular; baskets or bowls with radiating lines—hemispheric; semicircular bridal bouquets or corsage—crescent. It must be remembered that any one of the afore-mentioned examples could be designed to illustrate any one of the seven mentioned forms.

The lines of a floral design may also be classified as formal or informal. Generally speaking, formal design is symmetrical, whereas an informal arrangement is asymmetrical. The use of these terms to describe floral arrangements might be confusing because the terms are technical and should not be associated with the social usage of the words. An informal arrangement might well adapt itself to a formal room or costume, and a formal flower design could be perfectly suited to an informal setting. Japanese floral arrangements, symbolic and studied in line, would fit the informal classification, because those designs are typically asymmetrical.

Forms of floral design may also be classied as to period, such as Empire, Victorian, Renaissance, etc. J. Gregory Conway in his profusely illustrated books has done a magnificent piece of work, describing the many forms of floral design with detailed instruction for creating each type. Even the most experienced designer could gain added inspiration through repeated studies of his works.

COLOR

The proper use of color is fundamental. The mere mention of the word flower suggests color. The psychological effect of color in various combinations is often the greatest factor in determining the appeal of a floral arrangement.

The designer or salesperson in a flower shop is unavoidably conscious of color when selling or designing flowers for a particular occasion, a certain setting or specific costume. Generally, the first question pertaining to any design is that of color.

To discuss color intelligently with discerning customers, the florist must be familiar with the color wheel and some of the terms used to describe colors and their relationship with each other. The following brief definitions of color terminology are simple.

Spectrum: Color is the product of light. When light passes through

a prism it forms a band or a rainbow of colors known as the spectrum. This series of true colors is red, orange, yellow, green, blue and violet.

The *color circle* is formed by bending this band into a circle.

Primary or *basic colors* are red, yellow and blue.

Secondary colors are orange, green and violet. They are formed by a combination of primary colors, i.e., blue and yellow for green, yellow and red for orange, red and blue for violet.

Intermediary colors are combinations of primary and secondary colors, such as green-yellow, yellow-green, blue-green, green-blue, etc., making twelve combinations in all, which, when added to the primary and secondary colors, make eighteen named colors in the color wheel.

A *hue* is a color as it is distinguished from another irrespective of shade, tint or tone.

A *shade* is a color made darker by adding black.

A *tint* is a color made lighter by adding white.

A *tone* is a color made duller by adding gray.

Monochromatic color plan is composed of one color, with shades, tints and tones of that color, such as bright pink, medium pink or pale pink.

Analogous color harmony uses colors adjacent to one another on the color wheel, such as orange, yellow-orange and yellow.

Complementary color scheme is the use of colors opposite to each other on the color wheel, such as yellow and violet, orange and blue or red and green.

Near complementary color harmony is the combination of two colors, one color basic and one from either side of its complementary, such as yellow and blue-violet or red-violet.

Split complementary color harmony combines three colors, one basic plus the two on either side of its complementary, for instance, yellow, with red-violet and blue-violet.

Triadic color plan uses three colors equidistant on the color circle, such as red, blue and yellow or shades, tints or tones of those colors.

Most flowers are not true in color, but are combinations of colors in numerous shades, tints and tones. To know where they fit in the color wheel is of great help in designing. A reading of the aforementioned definitions seems cold and uninteresting, but, when they are thoroughly understood by the florist, his work with color in flowers will take on more meaning.

All kinds of rules and principles can be laid down about color in designing. They are merely guides to be kept in mind. A color wheel in one hand and flowers in another do not assure success by any means! One factor in the floral designer's favor is that few flowers come in strong full colors and are, therefore, less likely to fight. It has been stated on numerous occasions that color need not concern a florist, that any colors can be combined with ample foliage to good advantage. That may be true, but so much depends on how those colors might be combined and arranged!

We are frequently prone to consider only the physical aspects of color, adhering to the foregoing principles of color harmony and overlooking the more important *psychological* aspects of color and the reactions created by color in our lives.

Color reflects our moods and influences them. Everyone is conscious of color in clothing, home and surroundings. The first and strongest impression created by a gown, a home interior, a sunset, a landscape, or a floral arrangement is frequently that of color. The form or line of a design may be out of proportion and poorly assembled by careless technique and mechanics, but still that design might create a good impression just because the colors were expertly combined. Conversely, the perfectly proportioned line and form of an arrangement will seldom offset the reaction caused by a poor color combination.

Because of our reactions to colors, they may be classified as warm or advancing (orange, red, and violet) and cool or receding (yellow, green and blue.) Different colors also have qualities which give rise to certain emotional responses. Red suggests activity; yellow, cheerfulness; green, restfulness; blue, tranquility or calmness, etc.

Tints have a cheerful effect, while shades produce a somber feel-

ing. Tones or grayed hues create a soothing, relaxing impression. In considering the occasion for which a floral arrangement is designed, appropriate colors may be chosen for their emotional reaction. Any color poorly used may result in an unpleasant response, except for some human idiosyncrasies.

A natural question concerns white and its place in a discussion of flower color. Its place on a complete color wheel would be on the extreme perimeter, after all the palest of tints had faded out to white. Few flowers are a pure white, most of them having tints of yellow, green, pink, etc.

The florist, however, uses a great number of so-called white flowers. They should be used much the same as other pale tints or combined with other pastels to add richness. White used with vivid colors softens their brilliance, whereas black (at the center of the color wheel) would enhance the quality of vivid dark colors.

The effect of light on color, both artificial light and daylight, will surprise the novice. Some colors, such as blue and violet shades, lose their brilliance under electric light, whereas shades of red and yellow are not greatly influenced. A floral designer should always bear in mind the kind of light in which flowers are to be used, and, unless he is sure of his colors, should experiment with them under the kind of light in which they are to be placed.

Form and color, as discussed so far, might sound too complicated to be of any practical value or interest. However, those subjects, when mentioned in relation to specific arrangements done by florists every day, seem fairly simple. A florist's good taste in color and form, exemplified in his every day work, shop arrangement and window display, furnish the eye-catching sales appeal which is vitally necessary to success.

BALANCE AND SCALE

In designing, balance and scale are terms used to describe proportion pertaining to both form and color. Scale denotes the size relationship of various parts of a design and their proportion to each other and the surroundings.

Balance in designing means just what the word implies in general usage. If the line of an arrangement seems stable to the eye and not about to topple over, it is well balanced. The proportions of a design, whether symmetrical or asymmetrical must have balance. Perfect balance in form may be spoiled by poor balance in color. Dark colors are heavy in appearance and, as a general rule, should be placed low or near the center of any design, with the lighter colors forming the main outline of the arrangement.

The size of various flowers, as well as their colors have a definite bearing on the balance and scale of any arrangement. In an arrangement of purple stocks and large yellow mums (complementary in color), the form and size of the stocks would probably form the main outline, and the mums, heavy in size though light in color would be used low and near the center. This example, an exception to the general rule of color balance, is logical because the size and shape of the flowers offset their color weight.

A flower arrangement should always be in proportion to the size of the container and its setting, the corsage in proportion to the build of the wearer and the bouquet in scale to the stature of the bride or debutante, and the colors should have that same balance.

CENTER OF INTEREST

The center of interest, focal point or center of attention is usually just above the upper edge of a container in an arrangement and near the center. It is the bull's-eye or hub of a design to which the eye is attracted. Sometimes the center of interest is developed by a larger or more developed flower, a rich color, an unusual shape or an accessory, such as a figurine in a bowl, ribbon in a corsage, an orchid in a bouquet or a cluster of flowers and ribbon on a funeral design.

The center of interest, making all other parts of a design subordinate to it, if planned in advance will simplify other details of a design, even though it is frequently the last flower or accessory to be inserted. The center of interest in a monochromatic color scheme

may be a cluster of the same flowers or an accessory of the same color.

Rhythm in designing suggests motion in form and color and helps to emphasize the center of interest. A design which has rhythm has flowing lines and gives the feeling of movement or a graceful swing radiating from the center of interest. The right choice of colors used in forming these lines will accentuate the rhythm and center of interest.

Repetition also is useful in emphasizing the focal point. Curved lines in flower stems and foliage or color accents repeated in a design will give the dominance and emphasis necessary for a center of interest. By repetition, a line, color or accent enhances the focal point. For example, in a corsage, the graceful curved stems of lilies of the valley partly encircling a gardenia will give more dominance to the gardenia as the center of interest if the stems of the lilies all curve rhythmically in repetition, i.e., in the same direction. Applying these principles to color, the repetition of green-yellow tones in variegated privet foliage used in a corsage of Golden Nugget roses, with a chartreuse cymbidium orchid, will give emphasis, interest and rhythm.

The spotty use of color in designs of complementary or analogous combinations will spoil the rhythm and detract from the center of interest. Colors should be so grouped that they flow into each other or form a definite pattern where they are contrasting. Generally, one color should dominate a design through a grouping of flowers of one color or by contrast. If one color is brilliant in an arrangement of bold contrasts, it would not be necessary to use much of that color to make it dominate and to form a center of interest.

Without exception, the center of interest in both form and color should coincide or the entire effect of the design will be confusing.

UNITY AND COMPOSITION

The principle of unity in designing consists of the harmonious selection of flowers, accessories and backgrounds, giving thought to

texture, form, size, color, balance, etc., discussed previously. The appropriate fitness of all parts of a design, including its suitability for the occasion and setting, will give unity.

The texture of flowers and foliage must be considered before combining them. Dainty foliage or flowers should be combined with those of similar qualities, and coarse foliage and flowers with those of like texture. The same applies to containers, accessories, materials and ribbons used with them. It would destroy the unity of a dainty spring bouquet of flowers to combine the blooms with robust autumn leaves. There is no unity in placing large zinnias in a delicately designed Dresden bowl. All unity and harmony would be lost by wearing orchids on a calico square-dance costume or sporty, rust chrysanthemums on a velvet or satin gown. A modern arrangement of strelitzia and ti leaves would be incongruous in a living room decorated with colonial antiques. A pastel arrangement of delicate flowers would not be appropriate for a man's den or office.

Composition in designing, as in music and art, refers to the grouping or organization of different parts of a work so as to achieve a unified whole. Every good design is harmonious in character with all of its parts and surroundings.

MECHANICAL AND TECHNICAL AIDS

Thus far only the theories and principles of floral designing have been discussed, without mention of the mechanics and technique of assembling of the design.

The florist who keeps himself informed by reading trade journals and current books on decorations and styles will be alert also to new methods and equipment which simplify and improve his work. He will not only admire the workmanship demonstrated at design schools but will adapt it to everyday use in his own shop. It is only good practice to do so as greater demand for flowers follows better designing. There is always a demand on the part of the public for new ideas in using and arranging flowers. The best method of securing that business is by continuous effort on the part of florists to improve their designing and service.

XXXIV * *Display and Window Decoration*

Good window and interior displays are as powerful and valuable as the best sales personnel in any retail flower shop. Furthermore, effective sales display is less expensive in the final analysis than selling without benefit of it.

If an unbiased survey of retail florists everywhere were to be made, salesmanship probably would be listed as one of the weakest factors in their business operation. However, upon further breakdown, a basic cause for that condition would be the haphazard display of their flowers.

"One picture is worth a thousand words." The sense of sight being the strongest power of perception, makes point-of-sale display selling through eye appeal outrank all other methods. Other merchants make much better use of display than do florists, in many instances using flowers with their merchandise to make their displays more colorful and eye-catching.

SHOP DISPLAYS

Why then do so few florists fail to give flowers in their shops the advantage of good display? The following are some of the answers:

Because they are too busy. That is a common alibi, but, surely they are not too busy to sell more flowers! Every florist wants to do that, but still fails to take the time to display adequately the merchandise he has for sale. If he is really too busy because of an understaffed shop, he could soon, with one or two more employees, have a good floor display and increase the sales volume to such an extent that his whole operation would be more profitable. The busy, progressive florists are the ones who realize the value of proper shop display of their flowers and find time to do the things necessary for a good business.

Because it costs too much. Floor display of flowers, like other forms of advertising and promotion, does cost money. For the florist, the greatest expense is labor. He has the merchandise for sale to make beautiful, eye-catching displays in his shop, without having to add many props and accessories not already carried in his stock. All he needs to do is use the materials at hand and rearrange them effectively.

Because our shop is too small. The size of the business or floor area has no bearing on the relative value of display. The crowded, small shop really requires considerably more effort and thought to keep good displays so grouped in the sales area that the shop seems spacious rather than small, orderly rather than jumbled and pleasant rather than depressing.

Because it would not pay. The florist who makes this assertion has never really tested good showmanship in his shop. If he had, he would know how much easier it is to sell when the displays are attractive. His customers would have more confidence in his ability if his shop in its displays gave visual evidence of his knowledge. The florist who knows this has the kind of shop that is irresistible to passersby. One glimpse through the door makes them want to come in where everything is so well displayed that it is not only an invitation to buy but selling on sight. That kind of display does pay!

Because flowers do not last long enough. Flowers well displayed will last just as long as those bunched in a bucket in the workroom or hidden among plants and foliages in a dark corner. Arrangements of flowers and plants, if changed daily and sold from display, are assets rather than liabilities. The displays of flowers which are not changed, but are allowed to deteriorate to a point beyond salability are expensive. Sometimes special displays are so intricate in design that the labor cost for daily replacement would offset the cost of flowers used.

Because we do not know how. This excuse is not heard frequently because it is one of self-indictment. An experienced florist is an expert and often is a consultant for other merchants on their display problems. His knowledge of decoration makes display of flowers and other

merchandise in his own shop easy. Through carelessness and poor management, though, his own shop interior is too often a poor sample of his real ability.

DISPLAY PROPS

Attractive floral display is possible in flower shops without the aid of numerous expensive props and accessories. Tables of simple lines and stands of various sizes and types to hold plants, flowers and accessories are practical, because they may be shifted to numerous positions, and put to many uses in the store. Built-in shelves, cabinets, consoles, mirrors, removable wall shelves and sconces are also effective. Strips of silk, taffeta, velvet, etc., in assorted colors may be utilized to camouflage stands and add glamour and contrast to many displays. Props, such as figurines, vases, urns, bowls of all kinds with candles and candelabra, if properly displayed in decorations with flowers and plants, are also profitable items for resale.

Some flower shops look like gift shops or specialty shops, because their interiors do not feature flowers and plants in a fair proportion to their non-perishable merchandise. Some sales areas are positively depressing because of the overpowering preponderance of artificial funeral wreaths lining their walls, when actually the sale of those items accounts for a relatively small percentage of the business. It is true a few of them can be displayed, and should be, but they need not dominate the scene the year around.

Cleanliness and neatness are prerequisites to any kind of good display. Good lighting and artistic arrangement of merchandise are also necessary. The sales floor should not look like a stock room, although there are florists who adhere to the merchandising idea that dozens of vases of the same design stacked on a shelf will sell faster than when a few are shown by themselves. Shops which operate on a lowprice policy favor that plan which follows that of other price and volume stores.

Better shops, whether they sell gifts, jewelry, furs, cakes, furniture or ready-to-wear, display only a few well chosen samples on the sales floor and show others when a customer wishes to see them.

Both plans have arguments in their favor. The clientele and type of traffic and neighborhood will help the florist make that decision for his own business.

PRICE LABELS

It is good business to have every item shown in displays clearly marked with price labels. That includes all flowers, plants, accessories and gift items. That kind of salesmanship and merchandising creates confidence in the shopper's mind and is recommended for every flower shop, whether the clientele be of the social set or day-laboring class.

Price tags and labels should be neat and legible, but not gaudy. Large placards and banners announcing prices and specials are not necessary in a flower shop. In huge markets and department stores, they do serve a purpose, but for florists, whose sales area is comparatively small, such signs would be conspicuous and would detract from handsome floral displays.

Some florists do not price their flowers and plants because they have few employees, all of whom are familiar with the cost, as well as the retail prices. In spite of that reasoning, for buyer confidence, price labels are worth while, because they keep prospective buyers from doubting the policy of one price to all. When a florist under-sells in spite of price labels, he will soon lose customer confidence. The best policy is one price and equal service to everyone.

REFRIGERATOR DISPLAY

Several times a day, every florist should give his display refrigerator the kind of critical examination a prospective customer would. Is it a fair sample of his work, artistically arranged with flowers well grouped as to variety and color? Is it overcrowded and are the shelves littered with leaves, broken flowers, petals, lunch sacks, coke bottles, etc? Are there some completed arrangements displayed from which the buyer may make a selection? Are all flowers priced? Are the glass panels sparkling clean? Is the exterior of the case spotted and the finish worn off around the handles? Is the floor in front

of the case wet and slippery, or are the floors clean and waxed? Is the refrigerator well lighted? Are wilted or old flowers permitted to remain on display?

Answers to these questions will determine to what degree the most valuable piece of equipment in a flower shop is being put to use for display. The most common fault with most display refrigerators is that they are overcrowded. A case which is too small for the business is really a greater luxury because of flower breakage and loss of display value than one twice as large as necessary. Ample refrigeration space for display and storage is real economy.

WINDOW DISPLAY

The dominating feature display of retail stores is always in the front window. That space in any retail business is the most valuable, because rent and real-estate sales values are largely based on frontage and the flow of traffic by it. To realize a profit from that investment, the florist must be window display conscious. Most florists are more exacting about their window displays than they are of the shop interior. Casual observation indicates that florists are inclined to be as discriminating about their show windows as their neighboring merchants are of theirs. The type of shopping district and clientele, of course, influence the type of display.

Every florist knows his business well enough to decide whether a display of Dresden vases arranged with Mrs. Finch roses and lilies of the valley or a silver epergne with candelabra on rich velvet would appeal to his customers. He might decide that earthenware and copper with carnations and snapdragons would be of greater interest to his customer, and the passing traffic at his location.

The important thing in display is *not the value* of the flowers and accessories offered for sale, but *rather the manner* in which they are displayed and presented for sale. All of the principles pertaining to form, color, composition, unity, etc., discussed in the previous chapter on design are adaptable to window display.

For a window display to be effective, it should contain a few

well chosen items, without giving the impression of a conglomerate clutter, overcrowding every inch of space. A few harmonizing arrangements or plants with plenty of open space about them, in a good setting with appropriate accessories and background will stop passersby. A few small figurines or miniature arrangements, along with larger flowers designs, evidencing attention to detail in their placement are things that cause the public to make closer examination.

Just one massive arrangement can be taken in at a glance. Such displays are excellent for auto traffic, but are not so likely to pull pedestrians into a shop. On the other extreme, only one rose in a large display window may be so dramatically presented that it creates more publicity than hundreds of blooms.

Some florists never price the articles in a window, preferring to have interested window-shoppers come into the shop to get that information. This gives the florist an opportunity to make further presentation and gives sales personnel an opportunity to close a sale. Other florists feel that it is better merchandising to put price tags in the window. Still others take a middleground by pricing only items of special value—leader items to bring more traffic into the store, where other arrangements on display will result in more impulse buying.

A window should always be so attractive that it amounts to an invitation to go into the shop. That cannot be done with dim lights, dusty merchandise, smoky plate glass, old overgrown plants, empty baskets or wilted flowers. If, however, such a display is a fair sample of the florist's ability and represents his stock of merchandise, he is being entirely fair to shoppers by advising them in that way, before they enter, so that they may expect to find more of the same inside. Neglect of store interiors, when all effort and talent is concentrated in window display, is misleading to shoppers. They feel inclined to turn on their heels and leave after a glimpse inside.

Window decorations should be changed completely at least once a week. The flowers in them might be replaced daily, with a variation in kinds of flowers, but keeping the same general theme. This prac-

tice permits the florist to use those flowers in design work, where their advanced stage of development is desirable. A few florists find it profitable to make complete window changes daily.

The greatest cost involved in good flower display is that of labor. Yet, the busiest shops are the ones which most often have the best window displays year in and year out. It is logical in many of those cases to conclude that their good displays have contributed to their continued prosperity. A few florists use their windows as their primary promotional and advertising medium. They attribute their growth principally to that asset, backed up by good workmanship and satisfied customers.

Florists, compared to other merchants, are able to do all this at a minimum cost, because their merchandise is in itself so decorative and varied the year around. All it takes is some advance planning. A good designer could sit down and in the space of one or two hours list the themes for fifty to one hundred excellent window displays.

Without thinking of holiday ideas or the seasons and flower varieties, consider for a moment the number of civic events and activities which might be the theme of window decoration. To mention a few: Baby Week, Red Cross, city festivals, anniversaries, weddings, Community Chest, opening of Philharmonic or opera series, birthdays, patriotic ideas, fishing or hunting, vacation, school openings, graduation, homes' show, National Flower Week, fashions in costume and decoration, current events, apple week, horse shows, races, etc. These ideas used with flower displays are excellent public relations boosters. Educational floral displays are extremely valuable. They show how to use and enjoy flowers or tell the origin and nature of rare flowers and plants and give the names of new varieties of flowers as they come into production.

Windows employing motion or movement with a floral display always attract attention. Power-driven turntables, animated figures, water fountains, or a concealed fan, causing moss, plumes or flags to ripple in its current may be used effectively. The effect of motion may also be attained by changing light through rotating colored light

filters. Stunning effects may be created with black light and fluorescent materials combined with flowers. Flower displays should always be well lighted day and night, as long as there is sufficient passing traffic.

Any florist can tell whether or not his displays have the pulling power they should have. Do pedestrians stop to admire? Do passing autos slow down or stop and unload passengers who want a closer view? Do customers mention or praise the displays? Does the phone ring with orders for items displayed which might have been seen after the shop was closed? If those things do not happen, the florist is wasting valuable window space and should, with steadfast determination, begin experimenting with other and better displays for his flowers.

Good flower displays make of the flower shop a flower show for all to see and enjoy anytime without charge. The public will react to them with such great appreciation that the florist's name will be repeated countless times daily in conversations throughout the community. More and more attention will be directed to his shop, and buyers will recognize and treasure his trademark on floral gifts. That is when flower presentation through display really pays dividends. Those results are not beyond the reach of any ambitious florist.

XXXV * *Flowers for Gift and Home Use*

In the past decade there has been a greater increase in the use of flowers for gifts and home decoration than for any other purpose. In spite of this, the further development and promotion of flowers for gifts and home use, furnish florists a vast field to cultivate for more flower sales. To accomplish that end, it is necessary to sell intelligently and design properly every flower sold.

Contrary to general belief, florists could sell so many more flowers as special occasion gifts that the sales volume would skyrocket. Everyone realises that the American public is just beginning to adopt flowers as a year around home decorative accessory, but the families who consider them as a necessity in everyday home life are rare and comprise but a minute fraction of the population. Advertising and educational promotion efforts are wasted unless they are supported by proper display, real salesmanship, fair prices and good designing in the flower shop.

GIFT ARRANGEMENTS

Although any kind of floral gift might be appreciated by the recipient because of the sentiment which prompted it and because of an almost universal love of flowers, there are many things every florist can do to make the flower gift even more appreciated.

The first thing to be ascertained is the occasion for the gift. The sentiments prompting the choice of flowers as a suitable medium are numerous and varied. Aside from flowers to wear or carry, hospital bouquets, sympathy and holiday gifts which will be discussed fully in subsequent chapters, there are flowers sent to express sentiment for the birthday, anniversary, housewarming, bon voyage, appreciation, friendship, courtship, apology, congratulation, etc.

When a florist in the course of taking an order has learned of

the occasion, he is enabled to make suggestions which will end in the sale of flowers so carefully selected and arranged that they are appropriate and suggestive of the sentiment involved. In many cases the special occasion greeting on an enclosed card is superfluous because the floral arrangement so aptly carries the message.

What is it that makes the floral gift entirely appropriate? First of all the age and sex of the person to whom it is being sent will have a definite bearing on the selection. The choice will vary depending on whether the recipient is a young woman, a school girl or boy, a child, a business man or housewife. Next, the place where the flowers are to be used should be known, because the office, hotel room, home, factory, schoolroom, studio or club room will call for different arrangements.

When even more specific information can be secured such as color scheme, style of decoration or even the specific spot where the flowers will be placed, the florist is all the better equipped to assist in choosing the right gift. When these details are not known a more versatile arrangement may be sent which would be suitable in a number of spots, such as console table, buffet, mantle, book case, end table or desk.

The personal preferences of the recipient for certain kinds of flowers, colors or types of arrangements are also important. It would not show much thought or consideration to send a modern arrangement of exotic tropical flowers to a woman who appreciated dainty, quaint flowers for her colonial home. Nor would it be appreciated as much if carnations were sent to the young lady whose personal preference was for roses, or vice versa. To send an actress vivid red or orange flowers when her color preference is for pastels, typical of her quiet demeanor and sweet personality, would be near to insulting.

The florist taking these orders frequently fails to use adequate salesmanship. Too often the order is hastily taken, merely to satisfy the purchaser's idea concerning price, rather than making an effort to learn about the home, personality and taste of the recipient. It is extremely important to the florist that the recipient of the gift be

pleased with the flowers. She will be if he sends flowers or an arrangement which harmonize with her home and activities. Then she, too, will consider patronizing that florist for her floral needs.

Women today are fastidious about their wardrobes and their homes. Just any bunch of flowers are not likely to please the average woman regardless of the size and luxuriousness of the bouquet unless their color and arrangement are adaptable to use in her home.

Any florist who takes the time to get the necessary information from his customer to enable him to so fill the order in a fashion to completely suit the recipient in every way will find his business steadily increasing.

FLOWERS FOR MEN

Contrary to a seemingly general belief, men are most appreciative of flower gifts for their homes and offices. That is not an indication that they have lost the hardy, masculine traits of their early pioneering forbears but rather an index to their growth and maturity since they have so increased their standard of living and working to include a love for beauty. The offices, factories and stores in which they work as well as the homes in which men live today show their keen discernment in choice of color to create atmospheres which increase efficiency at work and add pleasure for hours of relaxation.

It is only when a flower arrangement is poorly designed or inappropriate that a man shudders when he is the recipient of flowers. That happens when the purchaser and florist use poor judgment.

There are many occasions when flower gifts are sent to men. It might be a birthday, Father's Day, an anniversary of employment or leadership with his company, the opening of a new office or store, some special achievement or public recognition, election to office, or a number of other occasions when close friends or relatives might remember him.

Men generally prefer flowers of vivid color and arrangements that are bold and sturdy in feeling. Red roses and carnations are frequently chosen but other flowers in shades of yellow, orange, deep blue and

white are equally appropriate. Clever designers can use almost any kind of flower in such a way that the finished effect is definitely masculine.

The addition of accessories to the flowers in arrangements are often used to make them belong definitely to a man. Many of these combination gifts leave flower shops daily. They include such items as cigars, cigarettes, playing cards, books, magazines, fruit, candy, dice, sportsmen's supplies, etc., which are made part of a man's floral arrangement. In many cases the florist incorporates the theme of a man's hobby or favorite sport.

The choice of the container for flowers to a man, aside from the usual vases and baskets, might be a large ash tray, a stein or pilsener glass, a mug with horse head design, a jumbo cup and saucer, a fishing creel, or a bud vase which he might use for a desk in his library, study or office.

In addition to cut flowers, both blooming and foliage plants make ideal flower gifts for men. A chrysanthemum plant in a suitable jardiniere or foliages planted in brass or pewter are always appreciated as lasting decorative pieces.

FLOWERS FOR CHILDREN

The idea that children below teen-age do not appreciate flowers as gifts is fallacious. In many cases they are even more thrilled and excited with flowers than grown-ups. Florists can encourage this trait by exercising caution in selecting and arranging flowers for youngsters using combinations of colors and varieties that would interest them.

Alert florists today have in stock novelty containers for flowers and plants, which appeal to youngsters. Decorative ceramic pieces for boys and girls are too numerous to mention. Toys, books, candy, games, etc., may be combined with flowers to make them typically belong to any age group. The color combination of the flowers may be taken from these added accessories.

Any boy or girl enjoys receiving things that arouse the imagination, that can be used in play, or that can be used for decoration

in their rooms. The florist who bears in mind the interests of children can please them and create floral arrangements in every way fitting to any age or occasion.

BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

Because of the strong sentiment connected with birthdays and anniversaries, the flower gift buyer is more interested in the flowers carrying a message than anything else. That is why red roses significant of love are so generally selected by the suitor for his sweetheart's birthday or the husband for his wife on their anniversary. Other flowers may mean as much when tradition about them is developed.

Sometimes the recipient's favorite flower is sent or the choice is left to the florist who must then ask questions to enable him to choose flowers that completely satisfy both buyer and recipient. These important gifts can say so much if the florist makes a good choice combined with fine workmanship and service.

Various flower containers or accessories are often purchased at flower shops and sent arranged with flowers as lasting remembrances of the birthday or anniversary. These gift items are becoming a sizable portion of the sales total in many flower shops today and the public is relying on the florist more and more to supply their needs in this respect.

Attractive vases with built-in music boxes which play "Happy Birthday to You" are now available to florists. One of these arranged with flowers, playing the tune when presented makes a lasting impression of the gift and the occasion.

The slogan "Send flowers to mother on your birthday" has taken root in many communities and results in added flower sales and more happy people who have found another way to express their love to mother.

Floral anniversary gifts to married couples from their friends are common. Appropriate novelty ideas abound for the wood, china, tin, silver and golden anniversaries. The flower colors, the containers used, and the novelties appropriate to the particular anniversary all give added meaning and sentiment to the gift.

In many instances, the florist is called upon to design clever ways of presenting silver or cash gifts for anniversaries. The ingenious ways he can combine these gifts with flowers makes his shop a busy place because he knows how to glamorize an otherwise ordinary gift with his talent.

The young lady is most interested in the sentiment in her suitor's mind, and that feeling most often holds through wedded life, but having the sentiment in addition to flowers and arrangements harmonious to her home, makes them more treasured. Novelty hearts, cupids, interlocked wedding-rings and the like may be used to signify the occasion but in many cases these knick-knacks detract from the richness and beauty of a floral arrangement without adding to its sentiment. Unless carefully selected and beautifully executed they have no place in a meticulously furnished home.

Blooming or foliage plants in a variety of arrangements are appropriate gifts. Ceramic vases and bowls of crystal, silver or brass are chosen as lasting remembrances and most often sent with flowers.

Aside from color, it's not so much the kind of flower that counts, but rather the manner in which they are designed and the care with which they are wrapped and presented to the recipient.

OPENINGS

The store or office opening, the house-warming, and the seasonal opening of various clubs for business or social activities, account for a good share of flower gift buying.

The main thing for a florist to keep in mind when selling and arranging these gifts is the place where they will be used. Common sense would dictate that the arrangements for a super market or garage would contrast with the type of bouquet he would design for a beauty salon or milliner's shop. Flowers for any opening, whether it be home, office or store should be suitable, harmonious with other decorations and whenever possible suggestive of the character or nature of the business or home.

Here again, interior color schemes are of great importance to the florists who are interested in making floral gifts really look like they

belonged in their surroundings. This important factor is ignored generally for a store opening when basket after basket of flowers are sold.

Large standing baskets of spreading flowers clutter the aisles and usurp space needed for visitors whereas urns, bowls, vases and low baskets can be used on tables, desks, counters, show cases and ledges. These arrangements will show to better advantage in a crowded store and will not as likely be injured nor will they interfere with the movement of visitors.

Where several orders are placed for one concern, a visit to the store or a phone call to the manager for a description of the interior arrangement, is time well spent by any florist. Flower arrangements can then be designed for specific spots and so labeled. This will result in considerable good will from the store and more appreciation from a customer who knows his florist is interested in giving conscientious and complete service.

The setting and activity for which these flowers are purchased will suggest to the florist countless types of designs. To mention specific combinations of flowers and designs for office, store, factory, shop or home should not be necessary.

PRESENTATION FLOWERS

The concert, theatrical performance, graduation or debut result in numerous floral gifts to the ladies participating. These generally take the form of baskets for stage and dressing room or tied bouquets to be presented over the footlights. These stereotyped designs are generally too gaudy and large to reflect the good taste of the artist, the florist or the buyer.

Through salesmanship and more imaginative designing, the florist can change this trend away from the huge standing horseshoes of good luck and the overpowering arm bouquets with long ribbon streamers of congratulations. In no case should the presentation bouquet be so large that it dwarfs the performer with an unwieldy burden. The flowers should be easy to carry and handle, so de-

signed that they will not scratch the hands and arms or stain the gown. The color, size and design of the bouquet should also be complementary to the stature and dress of the artist.

In addition to the arm sheaf of flowers, bouquets of the cascade, crescent, colonial or French type are equally acceptable and most generally more flattering and graceful because they are easier to carry. Small arm baskets and novelty bouquets attached to muffs or fans are also attractive when they are in keeping with the costume and occasion.

BON VOYAGE GIFTS

In the larger seaport cities, the business done by florists in bon voyage gifts is substantial. These gifts vary from simple corsages to elaborate floral arrangements of orchids and other flowers in bowls and vases not too large to use comfortably in steamer cabins and staterooms.

Many of these gifts are vase arrangements so designed that some flowers may be lifted out to wear as corsages and boutonnieres. Flower arrangements are also combined with fruit and liquor hampers, books, magazines, cigarettes, cigars, candy or nuts, all of which add to the pleasure of a boat trip. These added accessories give interest and variety to these floral gifts.

FLOWERS FOR THE HOME

As emphasized previously, the promotion and sale of flowers for every day use in the home is a most fertile field for this industry to cultivate. The pride of the American people in their homes and their beautification makes this goal a plausible one. It can be done only through cooperative publicity and advertising followed by year around availability of flowers at reasonably low prices.

We are not now discussing gift flowers but rather those which are bought by homemakers for their own use. It is true that there are a few standing orders for assorted flowers to be sent to a housewife weekly or semi-weekly. This regular supply of seasonable flowers is

often the result of a gift from the husband or dear friends. Those and other gift flowers along with flowers purchased for special parties and informal entertaining account for the bulk of present cut flower sales for home use, because relatively few flowers are purchased for everyday family enjoyment by the housewife. There are a small number of families who keep a few cut flowers in their homes at all times. Those sales are made in winter months when their garden flowers are not available, and the year around to those who have no gardens.

There are two main reasons why this portion of flower sales is infinitesimally small. First, because cut flower prices are too high to be practical for every day use in the average home. Second, because flowers are not as accessible as candy, bread and newspapers.

Florists realize these conditions and many of them are working individually and cooperatively to appeal to the housewife to buy flowers for everyday use. Low cash and carry prices on seasonable flowers well advertised and quick service are the angles being stressed.

The ultimate goal of flowers in every home every day cannot be reached unless flowers are also accessible. Flower stands, stalls or shops will then be as numerous as drugstores, newsstands and grocery stores. Some of these will be located in grocery stores, department stores, dime stores, etc. Those stalls and markets, several of which are now in operation in many cities, sell flowers in bunches at a low markup compared to flower shops. They do not offer a complete floral service but they do cater to a class of the people who do not patronize flower shops generally, except for special occasion buying. They are filling a demand for flowers that florists have for the most part overlooked. Most of those sales are made on impulse. Those people would not have walked blocks to find a florist but would have gone home instead—without flowers.

There are not enough completely equipped flower shops conveniently located to appeal to this particular kind of customer. Yet florists have expressed themselves in open opposition to these flower stalls and in some cases have tried to keep them from operating. In reality, they are satisfying a need and creating a more universal use

of flowers. In doing this they are indirectly educating people to an appreciation of flowers which is bound to result in more business for the florist.

The low advertised prices of these flowers also appeal to the so-called carriage trade. If those buyers go to the market or flower stall repeatedly for their house flowers it indicates just one thing—they are getting flowers which they consider a better value than that offered by the florist.

No florist has a right to complain if another merchant can undersell him on that part of his business, as long as the operation is ethical. If the tactics are unethical, it becomes a matter for the Better Business Bureau to handle. Even without their interference, unfair business practices will soon put the operator out of business.

Every branch of the industry is anxious to see more flowers used and sold. More shops, stands and stalls should be encouraged by florists to the ultimate gain of all. Competition in business is healthy. Florists are no exception. They need more fair competition and friendly cooperation with one another.

The education of the public on how to use and arrange flowers for their homes must be backed by the sale of loose flowers at fair and reasonable prices. Those sales must not be penalized by other flower shop sales which require designing, delivery, charge accounts, etc. The florist who can show his customer how to arrange a few flowers effectively so that the annual cost is not exorbitant will sell fifty, seventy-five or one hundred of those bouquets each year to that customer. Suggestions on colors and combinations of flowers, how to care for them and information about varieties and their names are important parts of selling these flowers. And more important, good service and fresh stock cannot be ignored if flower use in everyday life is to become a reality.

XXXVI * *Wedding Flowers*

Flowers are an important part of almost every wedding ceremony. This tradition has prevailed through the years, and today even the simplest informal wedding at the pastor's study or the judge's chamber does not seem complete without some flowers,—at least, a corsage for the bride.

The custom of using flowers for weddings will continue without accelerated advertising and promotion as long as florists use good judgment in planning and selling these flowers. Should the flowers and floral decorations in the years ahead become a burden by being too lavish, too costly, too conspicuous, and too garish, the trend may swing to the opposite extreme. Florists have in their hands a definite responsibility, as well as an opportunity, in furnishing these flowers which are accepted by society as an integral part of a wedding.

The fairness, good taste and expert workmanship exemplified by many shops has made this phase of their business substantial and profitable. The buying public is discriminating, and news about florists and their work, particularly at affairs such as large weddings, spreads like wildfire.

A few sizable weddings well handled and executed by a florist will definitely establish his reputation for this work in his community. A few poorly managed decorations by the same token can soon ruin that reputation and at the same time harm the industry generally by leaving a bad impression with all who saw it. Flowers poorly designed and carelessly handled by one florist can set in motion a trend of thought in the public mind to the effect that the occasion would have been more impressive without them. In that respect, what other florists do, whether good or bad, reflects dramatically and directly on the welfare of the entire industry.

THE FIRST INTERVIEW

After the wedding date has been selected, one of the early appointments is with the florist. At that time, the florist secures general information as to the date, hour, place and type of wedding, the number of attendants, the place and time for the bridal dinner, and the reception, if any.

Much depends on the florist's approach in meeting the bride and her mother at this time. The interest and intelligence he uses in discussing the first general plans will determine whether or not the detailed plans will be discussed with him. Some families patronize several florists and will see each of them before deciding which one is to handle the wedding. The suggestions made and the attitude of the florist will be colored by his previous dealings with the family; naturally, if he is well acquainted with them, his conversation will be less formal and the order may be his to plan without any thought of their seeing other florists.

The bride who has complete confidence in the ability and integrity of a florist will place in his hands the responsibility of telling her what she should have in the way of flowers for her wedding. In addition to that, she may seek his counsel on cake bakers, caterers, and all other services that might be needed. She may want the florist's help in placing furniture for the reception, selecting music for the ceremony and festivities, etc. The florist who has experience along these lines makes himself more valuable to his customer, because he can help with other details in connection with the wedding.

As soon as a florist knows the time, place and size of the wedding, he should check his calendar to be sure he has not already booked his shop to capacity for that date. With other routine business to handle, a florist must of necessity limit the number of weddings he can handle in one day. Families who know this, will book dates for weddings months in advance and florists will commit themselves to hold time for those orders without obligation until a few weeks prior to each ceremony when the detailed order should be settled.

The number of wedding orders already placed for a certain date will determine whether or not the florist will be able to handle another one. Any buyer, or regular customer, would prefer having his florist refuse the order, rather than to accept it with the knowledge that other orders will prevent him from giving the best in workmanship and service.

At the first interview, the florist also asks about the gowns. If they are intricate in style or color, he will ask when and where he may see them prior to making final plans. Every florist should be conversant with the latest styles and trends in dress design as shown in brides' and fashion magazines.

Some general information may be given on approximate costs at a first interview. Having some idea of what budget the bridal family has in mind for flowers is extremely helpful in making the plans.

It may then be wise for the florist to suggest meeting the family at their home in the future to go over final plans after he has seen the clothes, and is familiar with the place for the ceremony and reception. In smaller cities, the florist knows all clubs, churches and hotels so well that he is immediately prepared to make suggestions for decorations.

Regardless of that fact, it is often good psychology to arrange to meet at the bride's home to make final plans for any large wedding. By so doing, the florist can learn much about the family's taste and mode of living, and he can plan for the flower decorations accordingly. In addition to that it makes possible a private interview, without interruption and general shop confusion in the background. To plan a large wedding well, it takes a great deal of thought and concentration. This is one of the times when the florist needs a consultation room in his shop.

Generally, the owner of the flower shop or the designer most experienced in wedding work, or both of them, will meet with the bride and her parents. Other salespersons, when asked about wedding flowers, should refer the customers to the persons who specialize in this work.

It sometimes happens that a customer, new to the florist, will ask

about flowers for a daughter's wedding. The florist should, of course, be solicitous, but at the same time emphasize to the family the necessity of confidence in his ability on so important an order. By being perfectly frank, but polite, he can inform the customer that he would like to plan the flowers and design them, unless the family has a favorite florist who is capable. Everyone respects the florist or other businessman who is not too grasping and mercenary.

MAKING FINAL PLANS

After the florist is familiar with the plans for the ceremony, dinner, reception and clothes, he should have in mind several suggestions to present to the family. This generally will be discussed by special appointment at the home of the bride or in his shop. Sometimes, it is helpful to go to the church with the family to plan decorations and to see the clothes to decide on bouquets. Most often these ideas may be conveyed by rough sketches and by using photographs of other decorations. The florist's scrapbook and album is most helpful here. Words, without some visual presentation, may often result in an entirely different impression on the listener.

This is one time when a florist should be explicit. His plans for the wedding should be so complete that there is no question unanswered in the minds of his customers.

First to be decided is the general theme or idea for the floral decorations, then the colors, the designs, the kinds of flowers and exactly how and where they will be used. The price of each item should be quoted by the florist. The plans then can be altered until there is an agreement on the total cost to the satisfaction of both customer and florist.

The florist should never forget that a wedding is an important occasion, filled with ceremony, emotion and devotion which mean as much to the day laborer and his family as it does to the business tycoon and his socialite family. The number of flowers and the design used may be determined by the budgets of the families involved, but the florist's interest and sincerity should not be influenced by the dollar sign alone.

Certainly, a florist must have minimum prices on bridal bouquets and decorations commensurate with his established retail policies. When these minimum prices are higher than the planned budget of the bride's family, the florist should explain his position kindly but firmly. He may say that his minimums were set at a figure which enables him to do what he considers an appropriate flower decoration. The people who see the flowers will ask which florist designed them. If the flowers are appropriate and suitable to the occasion, his reputation is not injured. The guests never know the amount spent for flowers, and the only way a florist could avoid unfair criticism would be to hang a price tag on all decorations; then, even the most inappropriate small arrangement could not reflect against him. Standards of good workmanship at minimum prices in various shops should never be lowered to save an occasional order and so run the risk of losing better ones in the future.

Occasionally the florist will be told to take care of the flowers as he deems best, regardless of price,—to mail his bill after the wedding. To proceed on that basis is generally poor business and will lead to dissatisfaction. Instead, the florist should tell the customer the cost and secure his approval before proceeding.

There is another precaution every florist should take in promising specific flowers far in advance of the wedding date. Sometimes the flowers are not available when the time comes. His special order for those flowers may become damaged in shipment. Whenever he foresees any possible difficulty in that regard, he should forewarn his customer and make advance plans for second choices. In no case should substitutions be made without first consulting the customer.

Stationery companies catering to the florists' trade print wedding forms which are convenient in taking wedding orders. They provide spaces for every possible floral requirement. Filling these forms and marking them completely at the time a wedding order is taken may prevent the oversight of some item needed such as boutonnieres, pew markers, prie dieu, going-away corsage, etc.

When the florist completes this sale he will have with him orders

for the following possible items: bridal dinner decorations and corsages, church decorations, bridal bouquet, attendants' bouquets including flowers and headdresses for flower girls, and candlelighters and flowers for the ringbearer, mothers' corsages, boutonnieres for the groom's attendants and the fathers, corsages for special guests and hostesses, going-away corsage and reception decorations.

THE REHEARSAL

The members of the bridal party for every formal wedding generally gather at the church or chapel for a rehearsal usually on the eve of the ceremony. For a large wedding, the florist should also be there unless he is thoroughly familiar with the church ritual. This is important to him, the bride and the church.

None of the decorations should obstruct the vision of the guests or interfere with the participants in the ceremony. The florist should know where the groom and best man enter and also where the officiating clergy move during the ritual. To place decorations which might hinder or make awkward any part of the service is inexcusable.

The florist must bear in mind that it is necessary for the organist to see the aisle and the ceremony. Other musicians or singers, if any, must also be considered. If the florist has gone over these details with the church office previously and is familiar with the church's requirements concerning placement of flowers, his attendance at the rehearsal would not be required.

When the ceremony is in a garden or ballroom, the florist should know exactly how the bridal party will proceed before placing any of his decorations. If the family cannot supply this information, he should ask that they consult the clergyman and advise him before he makes complete plans.

THE BRIDAL DINNER

A dinner or supper is customarily given for the bridal party the evening before a formal wedding. This most often includes out-of-town guests. The floral decorations should, of course, be in keeping with the type of wedding and size of the party.

The plans for this are usually made at the same time other decorations are selected, if the bride's parents are giving the dinner. Sometimes the groom's family, close friends or relatives of the bride are hosts for the wedding dinner, in which case they purchase these flowers. In no case should a florist solicit this order; if these people are interested in pleasing the bride and keeping this decoration in harmony with flowers for the wedding itself, they will ask the family for the florist's name and contact him.

The nature of this party may be informal or formal. It may be given indoors or on the terrace of a home, hotel or country club. The type of decoration should suit the surroundings, the number of guests and the type of dinner.

The formal dinner at home may call for no more than an arrangement in an epergne or silver bowl, depending entirely on the room and kind of dinner service and cloth. The colors chosen for the wedding may be used unless they clash with other colors in the room decoration. At the club or hotel, the formal table may call for huge candelabra with garlands of flowers and smilax and tall urns or epergne arrangements. Sometimes florists have special cloths made for these tables to add elegance or achieve special color effects, depending on budget and requirements.

Novelty centerpieces with cupids, hearts, wedding rings, slippers, etc., may also be designed for bridal dinners. Buffet suppers and terrace parties require decorations of a different kind and will be treated with other table decorations in a subsequent chapter.

The colors of flowers chosen for a bridal dinner might harmonize with the gown worn by the bride, and the theme of the arrangement might be based on its style. The lover's knot, frequently used in fashion design, may also be employed by the florist when practicable for table decorations at bridal dinners.

The groom normally sends a corsage to the bride for the bridal dinner. The smart florist can aid him in selecting flowers that will harmonize with the other decorations at the same time be flattering to her clothes and complexion. Corsages for the mothers are usually chosen to suit their gowns.

THE WEDDING DECORATION

The decorations for the wedding ceremony may be extremely simple or elaborate, depending on the wishes of the buyer. In every case, however, clean-cut lines in design and a few well placed arrangements of foliages and/or flowers will give the best effect. These interspersed with groups of cathedral tapers always furnish a pleasing and dignified atmosphere.

When the wedding is to take place in a church or a chapel, the florist should always adhere to that particular church's rules concerning floral decoration. Cooperation with altar guilds and the clergy, and adherence to their wishes and regulations, should not be questioned.

The woodwork and carpets in some sanctuaries have been seriously marred by tacks, nails, moisture and wire in the hands of careless florists who did not respect the property of others. Some florists' employees have offended the feelings of worshippers and those in charge by their disrespectful manners, such as boisterous conversation, smoking, not removing hats, or wearing muddy shoes while decorating. Those thoughtless actions make the work of conscientious florists more difficult and create suspicion of and distaste for florists and flowers. Some church regulations prohibit certain kinds of decorations, not because they do not conform to religious symbolism, but because of unfortunate past experiences with decorations carelessly placed.

Whenever candles or inflammable materials are used, fire regulations must be considered. Fireproofing inflammable foliages and materials should be considered by florists in advance, so that last-minute fire inspections will not disrupt the plans.

For the small informal wedding, an altar arrangement of flowers and candles would suffice. For a larger informal wedding a few other arrangements of foliages, such as woodwardia or Comador ferns could be added.

Many florists have potted palms and cibotium ferns which they use for wedding decorations. When the shapes and fronds are

good, they are beautiful tilted and elevated in palm stands so that the pots are concealed. Cut woodwardia, Comador, palmetto, cycas and other foliage may be used most effectively when arranged on standards holding jardinières of water or balls of moss into which the stems are inserted. These foliage arrangements enable the florist to use foliages best adapted to the season, and at the same time making it possible for him to design the arrangement to fit the spot in which it is being used. Slender tree trunks set in wooden pails of cement, with a ball of moss at the top, make excellent props for foliage background arrangements. Grilles or screens entwined with foliage are also effective.

Except for flowers on the altar, foliages and candles can be used to make a perfect background for any bridal party. Sometimes garlands of foliage or string smilax entwined on floor candelabra standards are sufficient. Caution should be the florist's watchword whenever he places candles in a decoration. Ventilating systems, open windows and doors cause drafts which make candles flicker and melt the tallow rapidly. Dripping wax on clothes, furniture and rugs results in serious complaints and claims.

As soon as candles are lighted, the church custodian should, by prearrangement with the florist, turn off fans and close windows which cause the drafts. Another precaution is to use glass bobèches on all candles to catch the melting wax. Whenever possible, waxed paper may be laid on the floor under the candelabra and camouflaged with fern fronds.

When aisle candelabra are used, they should be elevated six feet or more, so that there will be no danger of any guest's bumping one with a hat or dislodging it to cause a fire or personal injury. The same applies to candles used in church windows or reception decorations.

Aisle candelabra are most effective when entwined with garlands of boxwood, smilax or flowers. To prevent the aisle from looking too cluttered, they should be used on only every three or four pews. Too many ribbon bows give a jumbled feeling to any aisle or decoration and should be avoided. When ribbon is used, a few loops in

smooth, tailored lines are best. When stands are used to make an aisle through the chancel, or at a hotel or garden wedding, heavy silken rope is more effective and more practical, because it can be reused for years.

White canvas aisle runners should be used only where the aisle is not carpeted. Some people have the idea that a wedding is not complete without one. However, it takes only a moment's time to demonstrate how beautiful gowns appear silhouetted against dark carpeting. Unless the canvas is carefully laid and secured with masking tape, it ripples and slips when walked upon. If the guests are seated from this aisle, a double thickness may be used, the upper one to be removed by pulling it from the back of the sanctuary before the mothers are seated. This may be done without guests' being conscious of it.

In some cases, the center aisle is used by the bridal party only, the guests being seated from side aisles. To many persons, this seems selfish and causes inconvenience in seating and walking between the pews. In addition, the guests miss much of the beauty of the decoration because they do not get a centrally focused view from the middle aisle. The practice of having the ushers roll the canvas up the aisle just before the bridal party enters is another solution. If the canvas has not been laundered too often this works satisfactorily, but if not done carefully it may create an awkward situation.

The whole reason for the canvas aisle cloth is to protect the train on the bridal gown. But why be so careful at the church when the train is going to get wrinkled and soiled when the bride leaves the church in a car and attends the reception? A bit more dust on the underside of the train will not harm the gown much more because it will need cleaning anyway.

These facts should be convincing to the bride. In the author's opinion the white aisle runners are in most cases not necessary, not effective and not handled properly.

Another custom in wedding decoration which seems useless and most unattractive is the beribboned marking of pews where the family will be seated. If these seats must be marked, a cluster of flowers

or foliage is much more pleasing. Why mark the pews when everyone knows that the bride's mother, who is seated last, sits on the front left and the groom's parents on the front right? Other close relatives and friends are seated near them. The ushers know how many pews to hold for these relatives, who also know where they are to sit and so advise the ushers as they arrive. The only real purpose served by pew markers is one of decoration. If that type of decoration is effective or desirable for the church, it should be used the full length of the aisle and not just on the front pews.

The bride's principal motive for planning a church wedding is probably a spiritual one. The atmosphere of a church or chapel should not be converted by a florist to that of a garden or forest. If the bride wanted that she would have planned a garden wedding. Over decoration of any church or chapel can mar the dignity and solemnity of the ceremony. In every instance, simplicity and elegance both can be expressed with flowers in a dignified way suitable to any chapel architecture.

Wedding decorations in the home should always be in proportion to the room size, and in harmony with its furnishings. When informal, the decorations should be held to a minimum. Casual floral arrangements may be used in various rooms and the stair-rail, if any, might be swagged with garlands of foliage and clusters of flowers. The mantelpiece forms the altar setting for most home weddings, although the floor plan might make other settings more pleasing and convenient.

White flowers with greenery as a background form the color scheme for most wedding decorations. Sometimes, however, other colors are used to harmonize with the gowns or the setting in preference to the traditional white. Complete weddings designed entirely with flowers of one color or in various shades of one variety of flower can be most effective. An all pink wedding, a rose wedding, or a wedding using carnations, lilacs, chrysanthemums or lilies exclusively, may be pleasing and interesting. The combination and use of too many flower varieties in any wedding will not give a feeling of unity or harmony.

Every florist has a sizable investment in props he uses for wedding decorations. These include standards, urns, screens, arches, candelabra, hurrican lamps, bobèches, table covers, prie dieu, etc. This supply should be augmented from time to time by new and different pieces. They should be kept in good repair and refinished when necessary. The rental charge should be included in the price quoted on all decorations. The drayage to and from the wedding and the late work required to remove decorations after the ceremony should also be considered. The service a florist gives on wedding flowers is often worth as much as the flowers themselves.

THE GROOM'S FLOWER ORDER

Etiquette and precedent dictate that the groom provide the flowers carried by the bride, the mothers' corsages, boutonnieres for the men and the bride's going-away corsage. It is proper for him to pay for the bridesmaids' bouquets if the suggestion is made by him.

Generally these flowers are all selected by the bride, after which time the groom calls the florist to confirm the plans and make arrangements for payment. Sometimes the bride makes no plans for her flowers, preferring to leave the selection to the groom who will be guided to an appropriate selection by the florist who is familiar with her gown and the other flowers.

The mothers' corsage flowers are determined by their attire and may be worn on the shoulder, at the waist, in the hair or on a purse. Their gowns are generally chosen to harmonize with the colors worn by other members of the bridal party. The florist should, of course, recommend flowers in color and kind to coincide.

Boutonnieres for the groom, best man, groomsmen, ushers and fathers are usually all alike. White carnations are used most frequently and should be neatly wired and taped to fit the lapel buttonhole. Sometimes when white tuxedos are worn, dubonnet carnations or blue cornflowers are chosen to harmonize with the color of the cravats. For formal morning or evening clothes, small gardenias, white rose buds, stephanotis or lilies of the valley may be worn as boutonnieres, although carnations are preferred. Occasionally the

groom's boutonniere is fashioned from a flower like that used in the bride's bouquet, if it should include stephanotis, lilies of the valley or roses.

When the florist is pinning these boutonnieres on the men prior to the ceremony, he should always have with him a small pair of scissors or a knife to cut the basting stitches which close the lapel buttonhole on all new suits.

The bride's going-away corsage should always be designed to complement that costume, which is usually quite tailored. A removable corsage from the bride's bouquet is often requested. This practice should be discouraged by florists for several obvious reasons: First, the bouquet flower is generally not appropriate to the going-away costume; second, after a wedding ceremony and reception, the flowers are likely to be bruised and about to wilt, and, third, it appears somewhat selfish and awkward for the bride to remove the most attractive part of a bouquet before throwing it to her attendants. Explaining this to any bride or groom will generally result in a separate order for that corsage to be designed of flowers that will not immediately label her as a new bride on the honeymoon trip.

An awkward situation sometimes occurs when the groom has one florist and the bride another. The groom's florist should tactfully explain that in deference to the bride's choice, his part of the order should be given to her florist, who is familiar with the other flowers. This unselfish attitude does much to create good-will among florists and their customers.

THE BRIDAL BOUQUET

The flowers in a bride's bouquet, though generally white, may include some color such as pale pink, blue, ivory or orchid. For the informal wedding, it may be a tailored bouquet or corsage of any flower or color becoming to her attire. For a second marriage, the flowers used generally are of a pastel or deep tone, but not white.

The kind of flowers used depends on the bride's preference and the effect their texture and shape will have when carried with her gown. For sheer, filmy materials, such as net and chiffon, dainty

flowers should be chosen, such as sweet peas, alstroemerias, bouvardia, tiny roses, phaelanopsis orchids, etc. With crisp summery materials such as organdy and pique, daisies, gladioli, and eucharis blooms would be pleasing. With satin and lace, gardenias, orchids, stephanotis, roses, lilies, etc., may be used.

The style of the bouquet should be determined by that of the gown and by the stature of the bride. If she is tall, a sheaf of call lilies, chrysanthemums or roses might be flattering. If she is short and slender, a prayer book arrangement or small cascade bouquet would be in order. In no case should the lines of the bouquet detract from that of her gown and figure, nor should the flowers she carries be heavy and bulky. Small bouquets are usually the most flattering for brides.

If the dress and veil are lace-trimmed, touches of the lace may be combined with her flowers. Fine maline and net may be used conservatively in the bouquet to good advantage, because they are filmy and do not detract from the quality of the material of the dress. Pure white satin ribbon in the bouquet is not often good with any satin bridal gown, because almost all of them are off-white and of a much heavier texture and luster. Velvet, chiffon, net and lace usually are more pleasing with a satin gown, when some accessory is needed with the flowers. Bouquets designed on good lines, with some foliage for accent, are usually in much better taste than flowers combined with ribbons, net, pearls and the like, unless the accessories are perfectly suited to the dress.

Colonial, crescent, cascade and arm bouquets are most popular for brides. A detailed discussion of their variation and possible flower combinations would be endless. The prayer book or Bible is also popular. The flowers used on it should not dwarf or hide it completely. They should be clamped to the cover so that the book may be opened. The prayer book is carried only at the religious ceremony, and the flowers then removed to carry at the reception.

All bouquets should be so neatly wired and taped that they may be carried comfortably. Their balance, light weight and the shape of the handle are important features. Velvet wrapping on the han-

dle makes the best finish because it does not slip in the grasp or become sticky when held.

It should always be remembered that the flowers carried in a bridal procession are seen as much from the side as front. They should have enough fullness to prevent a flat, stiff effect from the side. The wire used should be light enough to permit graceful motion in the stems as they are carried.

The florist should be in attendance just prior to the ceremony to show each participant how to carry her flowers and to shape the bouquets perfectly before they go down the aisle. The manner in which flowers are worn or carried is as important as their designing. The loveliest bouquet may lose most of its beauty if it is not carried correctly. Generally, bouquets should be carried so that the upper flowers are slightly below the waist line; this is flattering to most gowns. Never should a bouquet be uncomfortable to carry in one hand for a considerable length of time.

THE ATTENDANT'S BOUQUETS

The kinds of flowers and the style of bouquets appropriate for the bride's attendants are almost innumerable. Almost any flower or color may be utilized as long as it is harmonious in texture and color with the dresses.

The number of attendants for a bride may be one or a dozen, depending on the kind of wedding. Generally the maid or matron of honor is dressed like the bridesmaids. Sometimes the shade of her gown differs, or her flowers might be varied somewhat from the others. Or she might wear a floral hair decoration to set her apart, but usually her position in the line is sufficient. The trend seems to be toward using the same flowers, clothes and colors for all attendants.

Suggested styles of bouquets, dependent on the dress design, may vary from the traditional colonial, cascade and crescent bouquets to fans, muffs, umbrellas and baskettes. Again the florist must use his imagination in planning distinctive arrangements suitable to the kind of wedding and the dress materials and styles. Daisy chains or garlands of flowers or baskets might be used in a garden wedding.

Flower fans might be used in the summer, and muffs of flowers or muffs trimmed with flowers in the fall.

Clusters of flowers may be used to accent bridesmaids' bonnets or hats, or flowers may be worn in the hair in place of hats. Juliet caps made of tiny flowers or leaves are also attractive. A few flowers tucked in the bow of a sash or a bustle may also be suggested for some bridesmaids' dresses. The florist must always bear in mind that his flowers with a gown are an accessory, not a feature. It is so easy to use a few too many and ruin an otherwise perfect picture!

Junior bridesmaids and flower girls may carry bouquets which are miniatures of those carried by the bridesmaids. The flower girl might have a tiny basket of petals to scatter down the aisle or a tiny flower-trimmed muff filled with them. In most cases, it is more effective for her to carry a tiny bouquet.

If a ring-bearer is used in the ceremony, he is usually four to seven years of age and carries the ring attached to the top of a tiny satin cushion, which may be trimmed with a few small flowers or ivy leaves. Or he might carry a single flower, such as a lily in which the ring is carried. He should wear a small boutonniere in his lapel.

Frequently, the candles are lighted by girls who are a part of the bridal party. They may wear wristlets, tiaras, Juliet caps or corsages of flowers and carry tapers entwined with flowers.

To illustrate and describe completely the many variations and effects a floral designer might create for brides and attendants, would take volumes. Our purpose here is merely to discuss the subject generally and permit every florist to use his imagination in designing flowers to fit his own wedding orders.

THE RECEPTION

The postwedding festivities generally follow a pattern which includes a receiving line and the serving of punch, champagne or cocktails with wedding cake and light refreshments. In many cases, dancing follows and in other cases a full meal is served. The florists' decorations must be planned around these activities.

Usually the wedding cake is featured and served from a table of

its own. The cake may be elevated by using a holder or platform which is frequently banked with flowers and foliage, like those carried by the bride. The top of the cake may be finished with a miniature bouquet, instead of the usual bridal figures or bells. The decorations and placement of the table should never interfere with the cutting and serving of the cake. Flower accents on the cloth, table skirt, the knife and candelabra may be used as desired.

Backgrounds designed for receiving lines depend upon the setting. Palm trees, woodwardia, and tall pedestal floral arrangements are effective. It must always be remembered that most decorations in a reception hall at a club, or hotel should be tall, or their beauty will be lost in the crowd.

Refreshment and food tables should be highlighted with flower arrangements and candles. When the reception is held in a garden, standing hurricane lamps are practical.

One request commonly made is for the florist to take some of the arrangements from the church to the reception. Where the reception immediately follows the ceremony, the florist should have a policy opposed to that practice. He can explain his position by saying that it would be all right to move some of the arrangements, if the ushers or friends do it, but that he would be criticized by arriving guests for not having completed his decoration on time.

A subsequent chapter on the subject of table and party decorations will contain suggestions applicable also to wedding receptions.

COOPERATION WITH OTHER SERVICES

The florist's work on any wedding is not completed until the festivities are concluded and all of the decorations are dismantled. He should always ascertain from the bride in advance what disposition should be made of any flowers still in good condition. Ofttimes they are left for the church to use or are sent to relatives and friends. Obviously, cut flowers should never be taken back to the flower shop and resold.

The detailed work with flowers, planning for a wedding, advance buying, estimating costs, arranging and timing the designing and

placement of decorations and their removal require many man-hours. The timing of the work must be exact; it cannot be done so far in advance that any of the flowers become wilted. Weather and keeping quality of flowers used are important factors. The efficiency and care with which all this work is done will determine whether the order was profitable.

During the course of all this activity, the florist will come in contact with club managers, hotels, churches, caterers and hostesses, bridal consultants, dressmakers and fitters, not to mention members of the bridal party, their families and guests. The cooperation he gives, the service he furnishes, the behavior and appearance of his workers, and the quality of his flowers and designing will leave lasting impressions in the minds of all these persons and so will reflect on his future business.

XXXVII * *Corsages*

Fresh flowers, worn for personal adornment are recognized as high style. If appropriately designed and selected, they are proper for any occasion on any costume which the wearer might desire to accent with added color or trim.

Flowers may be worn as an accessory on a coat, suit or dress, or they may be chosen to wear as a featured decoration forming the main trim for a costume. Like jewelry, veils, lace, sequins, beads and other items of feminine interest, they add glamour, beauty, color and charm to enhance a woman's personal appearance.

Women treasure corsages, and, if it were practical, they would always choose fresh flowers in preference to artificial blooms for all kinds of attire, including hats. However, they cannot always have at their fingertips the right fresh flowers, arranged and designed to go with the costume that might have to be worn at a moment's notice.

Because most corsages cannot be worn more than once without wilting and because of the cost of replacement, artificial flowers are resorted to as the next best choice. As a result, most corsages are bought for specific occasions, worn with pride as a note of elegance, and regarded as a luxury.

The popularity of corsages has increased steadily in recent years because of fine promotion and publicity, better designing and reduced prices caused by speedy workmanship, new techniques and ideas utilizing less expensive flowers. Growers who increased production of popular corsage flowers such as camellias, gardenias, orchids, etc., at lower prices, deserve much credit for this trend.

SELLING CORSAGES

The success of any flower shop's corsage business depends as much on the salesperson as the designer. Unless the person making sales on

the floor or by telephone understands this work perfectly and recommends the right colors, flowers and type of corsage for the costume, the order, when filled, in spite of good workmanship, may be all wrong.

The designers and sales personnel must keep abreast of the latest styles and fashion trends, including the terminology used to describe women's clothes, such as dressmaker suit, bertha, peplum, basque, pannier, jabot, bustle, ballerina, stole, etc. They should also be familiar with the current names used to describe various colors and materials used by the clothing industry.

When a lady asks what the florist would suggest for a toast colored organdy strapless ballerina dress, or a berry red dressmaker suit, or a drop-shoulder white eyelet party dress, or a mauve velveteen cocktail dress with stole, or white pique sunback dress with eton jacket and accessories of bittersweet color, or a formal gown of silver lame with bustle worn with a blue fox cape, he should be able without hesitation to make suggestions of colors, flowers and types of corsages that would be appropriate with the costume. The selection will also be governed by the personality, age, build and complexion of the person wearing the flowers.

Knowing when the flowers will be worn and the circumstances concerning the delivery, including temperature will have a bearing on the flowers chosen.

Many corsages are purchased by men for their wives, sweethearts, hostesses, etc. When they do not know what the lady is wearing, the florist may offer to get his information by telephone or offer the use of his telephone to the buyer. If that is not practical or would take away from the surprise element of the gift, the alternative would be to suggest neutral colors and flowers that could be worn a number of ways. Men, as well as women, are appreciative of the interest and help of florists in selecting the right flowers.

CHOOSING THE FLOWER

There are times when the florist is asked to use a certain flower in a corsage, in which case he is concerned only with how it is to be

worn. These specific requests may arise from a number of circumstances, such as a person's favorite flower, the sorority or club flower, a school flower or one of personal preference suggestive of some sentimental occasion.

Although the clever designer can do much toward making any flower into a corsage appropriate for any age, build or complexion, there are some flowers which seem best suited to youngsters and college girls and others to matrons. The large lavender orchid, for instance, seems out of place for a young girl, just as daisies and corn flowers are a misfit for the elderly woman. Big tuberous begonias, "glamellias," chrysanthemums or large orchids would become the tall stately woman but be all wrong on a short, buxom person. Pastel colors would flatter blonde or gray hair, whereas vivid colors would be preferred by a brunette.

The textures of dress materials suggests different flowers as much as colors do. For sheer materials, like chiffon, lace and net, flowers that are light and dainty, such as sweet peas, lilies of the valley, Sweetheart roses, Fleur d'Amour, orchids, alstroemerias, etc. are preferable. For coarse-textured tweeds and woolens, chrysanthemums, carnations or cypripedium orchids might be chosen. Crepes and satins suggest camellias, gardenias, roses, orchids and many others.

The occasion, too, may be influential in leading the florist to the right flower. Fall football games call for chrysanthemums. The tailored two piece street suit is perfect with violets, carnations, roses or grape hyacinths worn as a boutonniere. The garden party dress might be enhanced with florets of hybrid delphinium, gerberas or Mrs. Finch roses. The first night at the opera calls for orchids of all kinds, camellias, roses, begonias, eucharis blooms, etc.

After some practice and experience with corsages the florist realizes the great number of factors which should influence his recommendations: The style of dress, its material and color, the occasion, the age, stature, personality and complexion of the wearer, the season of the year and the weather. It sounds complicated, but really becomes simple and almost intuitive after experience. Visualizing the corsage on the person becomes habitual to the trained designer.

CORSAGES FOR CHILDREN AND TEEN-AGERS

Corsages for children are in demand for birthdays, graduations, parties, recitals, Easter, Mothers' day, Christmas, etc. The good handling of these orders by florists, plus excellent promotion and publicity, will bring about a steady increase in these orders.

A corsage for the little girl is a perfect solution to a difficult gift problem. At parties corsages on girls still too young for kindergarten are no rarity. Surprisingly enough, these tiny tots are as delighted as their mothers with flowers to wear.

Parents dote on this attention to their young daughters and take pride in the appearance of their children. The miniature first corsage sent to the new-born daughter in the hospital is treasured by her parents for the thoughtful sentiment. Tiny flowers in a corsage for a baby's gown to be worn at the christening ceremony will always be remembered. When the little girl has her first birthday, another corsage will be in order and so on for years to come.

This practice will continue and spread from family to family and community to community in ratio to the promotion and appropriate work done by florists. Ridiculously high prices and carelessly chosen flowers of poor design have been stumbling blocks in the path of this business.

Nothing thrills the teen-age girl more than the corsage for her first dance from her escort. But the parents of both children will discourage these youngsters, if florists are not understanding of childrens' budget allowances and the suitability of the flowers to the occasion. Florists have a difficult situation to handle in this matter. Educating and leading these young flower buyers to make the right selection and helping them to spend money wisely are real services the florist can give. Treating these young customers as he would have his own children treated by other merchants is always a safe course.

It is not easy to convince the high school boy who wants a white orchid for his classmate sweetheart for graduation or the prom, that Sweetheart roses, cornflowers, daisies or tiny orchids would be in

much better taste. These young fellows want their girls to have bigger and more expensive corsages than the other girls. The time spent in proving to the young men that the cost of the flower is not a gauge of affection or esteem will, however, be appreciated by their parents, and the boys too, will respect that advice in later years. Florists through cooperation with parents and teachers should institute real educational programs before school groups on the proper use of flowers.

The absence of this cooperation has resulted in the banning of corsages for dances and graduations in some high schools and colleges. When those bans are put in force, the florist is resentful and feels that he is the object of undue discrimination. The arguments and viewpoints on both sides have been expressed time and again. The whole question resolves itself into one of education.

Teaching the value of a dollar and good taste when the young swains are competing with each other for the attention of the fair sex is no small task. The banning of corsages is not the right answer. Neither is the unrestricted wearing of orchids and extravagant corsages by teen-agers. Both extremes are detriments to the florists' business. The solutions can be reached by florists and their organizations only through cooperation, education, publicity and promotion on the proper use of flowers. Over zealous florists interested primarily in immediate dollar volume have been at fault in helping create this problem. The individual efforts of florists in their own shops through more ethical, conscientious salesmanship and better designing will be a great factor in determining the popularity of corsages for young persons in the future.

HOW TO WEAR AND CARE FOR CORSAGES

Another important phase of selling corsages also pertains to education,—telling the buyer or recipient how to wear and care for the corsage. Some florists who realize the value of this, enclose instructions, printed or written, with all corsages.

Every florist has at some time personally experienced surprise and chagrin on viewing corsages designed at his shop ruined entirely by

being worn incorrectly. His impulse then is to go through the crowd and rearrange them, and, in most cases, just to turn them right side up. Most people wear their corsages with the stems up and flower heads hanging down. This custom began in the days when flowers were not wired and weak stems and wilting caused the florets to droop awkwardly in corsages.

Practically every corsage today is designed to wear with the stems down and the flowers up, as they grow. This applies more emphatically to orchids, because that flower loses its shape and beauty when worn upside down. A written note on how to wear a corsage should be enclosed with it. When it is designed to wear on the wrist, in the hair or some other way, that fact should also be mentioned, adding also that the wired stems may be bent to reshape the corsage to make it fit the wearer and her costume becomingly.

No longer need the girls at a college dance or the matrons at a concert meet their friends with identical corsages. Florists today use a wide variety of flowers and colors in corsages made to wear in many different ways. Some of the types of corsages would include those designed: 1. For the hair, as tiaras, Juliet caps, barrettes, half hats, etc. 2. For the shoulder, as boutonnieres, shoulder straps, clip (chatelaine) or epaulets. 3. For the neck as a necklace, lei, lavalier, or brooch. 4. For the waist as a buckle, side drape or bustle. 5. For the purse, fan, stole or furs. 6. For the hat. 7. For the wrist or arm as a bracelet or sleeve decoration. 8. For the ears, as earrings. 9. For the hand, to carry, or the finger as a dinner ring. 10. Or in any other way to trim a particular costume.

Many persons do not realize the importance of temperature and humidity in keeping flowers. Without caution from the florist, corsage boxes are sometimes thoughtlessly placed in freezing temperatures to keep them until they are worn! Corsages worn outdoors in freezing weather are ruined before they reach the concert or party. Every florist should tell his customer how to handle and care for a corsage, how to use the cellophane conservette, how by adding a bit of moisture the flowers may be revived for future use and how to handle fragile flowers to prevent bruising. For the dance, always suggest

that the shoulder corsage be worn on the right shoulder to keep it from being crushed.

Whenever dyed flowers are used, the wearer should be warned of the danger of dye pigments' rubbing off or moisture's causing them to stain clothing. Some protection may be afforded by ribbon and foliage back of the flowers.

HINTS ON DESIGNING CORSAGES

Be sure that each flower is properly wired and taped to give a neat protective finish which will not scratch the skin or mar the clothing.

Remember that the wax on floral tape will rub off and spot dark clothing when it is warm.

Keep the weight of corsages as light as possible by using a minimum amount of thin wire and removing bulky stems.

Do not combine too many colors or varieties in one corsage; generally two are enough and one might be better. When combinations are desirable, be sure they are harmonious in texture and feeling.

The natural flower foliage is always best when practical to use. Carnation foliage is ideal and keeps as well as the flower.

"Spaghetti", too much fern, ribbon, net, feathers and tinsel has ruined more corsages than anything else.

Unless certain about the clothes a corsage is to be worn with, be cautious about using any ribbon. When ribbon is used, it should preferably be the same shade as the flower.

Silver and gold metallic ribbons are not desirable on daytime corsages, unless there is gold or silver in the dress.

Corsages should be made along graceful, curved lines and not stiff and straight.

Always remember that most corsages, particularly those worn in the daytime, are an accessory. They should always enhance the costume and not overpower it.

A good corsage is always comfortable to wear, and it is becoming, in part, because the wearer is not conscious of it.

Rosettes of ribbon tied around the stems are not so effective as a few loops cleverly worked in with the flowers.

Break the set appearance of gardenias and camellias by placing their leaves behind them as collars in an irregular, natural appearing line, not perfectly symmetrical.

Green is the preferable color for wrapping the stems of most corsage flowers.

Next to fresh flowers in importance is the neat finish an expert designer gives every corsage.

The main reason some shops receive a preponderance of open orders for corsages is because the designers in those shops are expert in choosing flowers and designing them for the costumes and occasions within price ranges mentioned by their customers.

XXXVIII * *Flowers in the Hospital*

Flowers are the most popular of all gifts and remembrances sent to hospital patients. This prevalent use did not stem from any special florists' promotion as much as it did from a love of flowers, which in themselves convey a message of cheer and thoughtfulness not inherent in other gifts or greetings.

The potent punch of the universal slogan of the florists' industry, "Say it with flowers", must not be minimized. How much that suggestive phrase has influenced people to use flowers for sickrooms as their medium of expression will never be known, but no more appropriate, inclusive and persuasive words could be coined to publicize and sell flowers.

Flowers for hospitals and sickrooms account for more sales volume for some shops than any other occasion classification. Usually this is because of the proximity of the shop to hospitals while in other instances it has resulted mainly from the fine reputations of those shops for that type of work.

Customer satisfaction hinges first on the principles of salesmanship practiced by the florist. Without effective selling, the best designer's skill may be lost. So much depends on how the sale is made and what is sold. Yet some florists pay little attention to that phase in taking the orders.

COOPERATION WITH HOSPITALS

That careless attitude during the early years of World War II resulted in serious repercussions, causing a ban on flowers to many hospitals, which were understaffed. The work required to handle and arrange flowers was more than nurses and assistants could do when their time was vitally needed for other services to patients.

Only quick action, enlisting the cooperation of all florists' organi-

zations, local and national, prevented the ban from spreading and becoming permanent. But, not until their business was curtailed and their lack of cooperation emphasized by action against it, did florists take notice and do something about it.

Florists met with hospital associations, including staffs and nurses, and, by pledging themselves to send flowers already arranged and better designed, thus saving the nurses' time, gained a retraction of many bans and prevented others. Cooperation also on times of delivery and methods of handling these flowers created a better understanding.

Were it not for that experience with hospitals, florists would still be sending loose bundles of flowers, not arranged and without containers. As in the case of school bans on corsages and "Please omit flowers" on funeral notices, florists were not stirred to cooperation with hospitals to serve them better until they were forced to do so by discrimination against flowers.

It takes little effort by each florist in daily business to prevent these serious conditions, but it takes months and years to overcome them after they are established. Public favor back of flowers as morale builders can be maintained only as long as florists continue to cooperate with the institutions which handle their flowers.

The following recommendations on hospital flowers were made to all florists by their national and local organizations and have since been backed up by good performance:

(1) Accept no order for loose flowers to go to a hospital. It should be easy to explain to your customer that a flowering plant or flowers arranged in a container are much more satisfactory.

(2) All cut flowers for hospitals should be delivered in a suitable container and should contain a solution of flower preservative, such as Bloom-life or Floralife. Be sure to tell the hospital management or the superintendent of nurses that there is no need for changing the water or clipping the stems.

(3) Instruct your delivery boys to remove and carry out wrappings and boxes, so that the plant or flowers may be delivered to the patient without additional work by the nurses.

(4) Ask your customer how much longer the sick person is expected

to be in the hospital. If it is a relatively short time, suggest that the order be placed for later delivery, when the patient is at home and may appreciate and be more able to enjoy the flowers. Too often a person in a hospital is swamped with flowers and has none later on.

(5) Consult with the superintendents of the hospitals in your town. Tell them what you are trying to do, and ask them what else you can do to help them. They may want flower deliveries at a specified hour each day. On the other hand, they may prefer to have deliveries staggered throughout the day. Whatever their desires may be in this or in all other suggestions they may make, see to it that every florist in the city is informed.

Increased use for flowers in hospitals will follow in the wake of better selling and designing by every florist.

SALES SUGGESTIONS

Since cut flowers for hospitals are now arranged in containers, the florist has assumed the added labor of designing these orders. The added costs for containers and labor must, of course, be considered in pricing these items. Some florists use a percentage method, allowing fifteen to twenty-five percent of the sale price to cover these costs. Others use *papier-mache* bowls and vases, which cost about the same as boxes in which they would pack loose flowers, and they make no allowance for extra labor or containers. Some of the latter arrangements, though low in cost, are not an asset to the reputation of the shop, except for the price. These are matters of retail policy for each shop to decide.

Sending flowers already arranged in containers is considered an opportunity by many florists instead of a bothersome obligation. They are interested in how their flowers look when they are used, which is not the case when loose flowers are sent. Customer dissatisfaction is too easily created by the mutilization of cut flowers in inexperienced hands. The busy nurse cannot take time to properly arrange flowers properly. Ten dollars' worth of flowers might look like half the value when dropped in any container, whereas five dollars' worth of flowers arranged by a florist might give the impression of a ten dollar value.

The customer ordering hospital flowers frequently objects to buying a container and insists that the hospital and family have plenty of them and can arrange the flowers. The florist should state the policy of his and other shops to send only arranged flowers, fulfilling their pledge of cooperation with hospitals. The easiest and best way to overcome any doubt in the buyer's mind is to have on display at all times some completed various-priced arrangements suitable for the sickroom. The skeptic soon becomes an enthusiast and in the future will order all gift flowers arranged.

In many instances the shopper has no idea of what he wishes to send a sick friend. The florist handling the sale, after ascertaining whether the flowers are for a woman, man or child, will learn whether or not the customer or recipient has any preference for certain flowers or colors. The suggestions he might make are too numerous to describe, but the ideas mentioned in selling gift flowers (Chapter XXXV) would apply. As mentioned there, the flowers should suit the person, his age, interests and tastes as much as possible.

The nature of the illness may affect the kind of flowers chosen. Heavy pollen in some flowers is intolerable to persons suffering from hay fever. Vivid colors may be irritating to the patient suffering from a nervous disorder. Pastel colors are restful and soothing. Flowers with heavy, sweet fragrances, such as gardenias and tuberose, annoy many sick persons.

Some of the many appropriate floral gifts to a hospital patient include: A blooming plant in a jardiniere; a hamper planted with a variety of blooming plants; a jumbo cup and saucer arranged with flowers or plants; a bud vase with a few tiny roses or a spray of orchids; a demitasse cup and saucer with a miniature arrangement; a floral aquarium; a man-size ash tray arranged with flowers; a brass bowl of foliage plants; a water pitcher filled with garden flowers; novelty ceramic figurines arranged with foliages or flowers; cigarettes, cigars, candy, books and magazines combined with flowers; a pillow corsage; a brandy inhaler with flowers inside; flowers with a fan which can be used in hot weather; etc.

FLOWERS FOR THE MATERNITY PATIENT

The maternity floor is one place in the hospital where joy is evident. New babies, proud fathers and mothers receive congratulatory flower arrangements by the score. Florists try to convey in their flowers the special significance of the occasion and to express appropriately the good wishes and congratulations of friends and relatives, who are rarely permitted to visit these floors.

Baby colors of pink, blue and white are over-worked and bouquets of yellow and deeper colors often are more appreciated because they are different. Cradles, buggies, booties and potties are commonly used as flower containers. These traditional novelties are appreciated by parents of the first baby, but smart florists suggest different items for the mother who is a maternity patient for the third or fourth time.

Where the buyer is interested in novelty items instead of an attractive arrangement which might be sent for any occasion, many suggestions can be made. When the baby is a boy, a miniature pair of boxing gloves or a catcher's mit may be attached to the bouquet with a card reading, "Congratulations to the new champ." When it is a baby girl, a tiny corsage might be added with a card mentioning the daughter's first corsage. Rattles, teething rings, baby spoons or toys may be arranged with the flowers also.

Manufacturers of pottery, sensing the demand for different novelties for maternity patients, make a wide variety of containers for these flowers. Blocks, carts, bunnies, kittens, milk cups, water bottles, clowns, drums, teddy bears and milk bottles are but a few of the items made for this purpose, in addition to vases with stork designs, or nursery rhymes. Madonna vases and cherub figurines are also popular. Some of these vases have music boxes built into them to play tunes such as "Rocka-Bye Baby" and Brahms' "Lullaby."

Another suggestion is a miniature of the mother's bouquet for baby daughter. The imaginative designer can create appropriate maternity arrangements week after week without duplication. The shop in which he works will always be a busy place and the shopper will

never leave because there is nothing "different" to be had for her friend in the hospital.

TIPS ON DESIGNING AND HANDLING

There are only a few places in the hospital room where floral arrangements can be placed. For that reason, huge designs are out of place and overbearing. Do not burden the patient and nurses with any thing too heavy or too large to move easily.

When the patient is known by the florist as one who is likely to receive several bouquets, he should keep a record of them as they are delivered to enable the designer to arrange something different each time. When the florist knows that many flowers have already been sent, he should suggest an occasional miniature arrangement, which may be elegant or simple. By contrast it will probably receive more attention and comment than the others by contrast.

Flowers *always* should be securely arranged and anchored in their vases. Flower preservatives should be added to the water. An attached card mentioning this and request that water be added on delivery and daily, and it may also recommend any special care required. It is not good business to loan or rent vases and attempt to pick them up at hospitals. Every arrangement should be well balanced so that it will not tip if brushed by a nurse or visitor.

The delivery man's appearance and manner and the care with which he handles flowers in hospitals will have a definite reflection on the shop he represents. The driver should carry flowers with the front away from him so the beauty of the arrangement shows as he passes in the halls. Try as much as possible to deliver hospital flowers when there is the least congestion, such as after the rush of routine examinations by doctors and nurses,—in other words at times when the staff would prefer to receive them. Get hospital room numbers by the phone to save the driver's time, prevent errors and assist hospital nurses and clerks.

Attaching a flower to the bouquet with a card labeled "for your favorite nurse" will obtain good will and cooperation in caring for the flowers in the hospital.

Use more imagination in decorating blooming plants and use waterproof pot covers or jardinières to keep excess water from trickling on the furniture.

Remember, always, that the best advertising comes from the people who see beautiful, unusual arrangements. More people see them in hospitals than in homes. Not only friends but other patients are interested in knowing where they originated.

When several orders for one patient are received at the same time and it is known that the patient will be hospitalized for several days, suggest spacing the deliveries on different days.

Fruit combined with flowers is always a welcome change for the convalescent.

Wilted flowers are worse than none at all. Use only fresh flowers and be sure the stems are trimmed and placed in water deep enough to last, even though the vase is not kept filled to the brim.

Refrain from using too many flowers which shatter easily, causing an hourly wipe-up under the arrangement to keep the room tidy!

So far as hygiene or health may be concerned, it is not necessary to remove flowers or plants from a patient's room at night except to get them out of the way or out of drafts and cold air from open windows. The old theory that they rob the room's atmosphere of oxygen has been proved scientifically to be without basis in fact.

Patients see their flowers from a reclining position which is entirely different from that of the designer standing at his worktable. The beauty of tall arrangements and plants is lost to the patient unless the flowers face to the front instead of up.

When facilities are available at the hospital, the driver should fill the containers with water on delivery. An alternative would be to have extra water in his truck for this purpose. Nurses are often too busy to do this before the flowers begin wilting.

An occasional trip to the hospital by the florist, walking down the corridors and glancing into rooms, is a revealing experience. Such graphic self-education will lead to improved design, delivery and sale of these flowers.

XXXIX * *Table and Party Decorations*

Floral decorations at parties, luncheons and dinners for the entertainment of guests gradually are being accepted as a social necessity. The selling of vast quantities of flowers for these special occasions and the planning and assembling of these decorations are major activities of the retail florist. The ability, equipment, staff, reputation and location of flower shops have a definite bearing on their sales of flowers for these affairs.

The informal luncheons and dinners at home for a few friends mean everyday orders for florists everywhere. Formal banquets, teas, buffet suppers, and parties for large groups in clubs, hotels and mansions, though not so numerous, necessitate advance planning and buying, and probably account for as much of the sales volume for some florists as do the everyday centerpiece orders.

Because of their prominence, floral decorations are the subject of considerable conversation. The florist's name is invariably mentioned and comparisons are made by the guests who discuss the ability and work of their florists. Like other trades and professions, florists take the spotlight for evaluation. "My florist does things right, or he doesn't take the order", "His flowers are so expensive", and "Their flowers don't last", are but a few typical over-the-teacups remarks.

Those innocent statements expressed to friends with a sample of the florist's work before their eyes are potent factors in building his reputation in one way or the other. That reputation is his most valuable asset—the one thing that influences people in their buying more than all the paid advertising.

That is why the florist interested in a continuing good business will not accept an order unless he can do it creditably. If the customer's budget is too low he would prefer to lose the order. For

that reason florists have minimum prices on centerpieces and other decorations. The variance in the types of shops and their policies cause these prices to differ greatly.

COOPERATION WITH CLUBS AND HOTELS

The source of a great number of orders for table decoration is not the host or hostess but the manager of the club or hotel handling the party. These dining room managers have the opportunity to see the work of many florists every week, as they receive flowers ordered for luncheons, dinners, etc. They soon determine, in their own minds, which florists send in consistently good work.

They are genuinely interested because the decorations add so much to the success of the party. Appropriate flowers, like fine linen, silver, china and dining room furnishings, add zest to eating. These managers know that the same food tastes better when it is served properly with all appointments carefully chosen. The appearance of the table is of major importance and much of that responsibility is the florist's.

Solicitation, payment of commissions and gifts of flowers to these managers by florists are not so influential in securing their orders as are the type of work and cooperation they receive from the florist. The florists they patronize when ordering flowers for parties are the ones that can be depended upon for fresh flowers, fair prices, good designing, punctuality and cooperation. Bribes, commissions and gifts mean nothing in comparison to satisfying their customers with the complete service they give, including the flowers they buy for them.

The manners, appearance, and interest of the delivery man when placing flowers on the tables in these dining rooms and contacting the personnel are also important. For larger decorations, the florist should send a designer to supervise their placement and arrangement of the flowers. This attention to detail takes time and costs money and must be considered in estimating costs and pricing decorations.

LIABILITY FOR CONTAINERS AND ACCESSORIES

Most of the floral designs for tables and parties necessitate the use of many bowls, candelabra and other accessories or props. Some florists have quantities of these items which they rent for parties. Their use and replacement costs should be included in the prices of these decorations.

This service generally entails the service of picking up these props after the parties. Damage caused by handling and delivery are risks which the florist assumes. His investment in props is by no means a small one if he sells decorations for many large affairs. It is, however, a good investment if he uses them and makes them pay his business a profit. The properly chosen accessories may add as much to the effectiveness of floral decoration as the flowers themselves.

Nothing could be more out of place than unconcealed tin pans covered with foil and papier-mache bowls for flowers at a formal banquet. Yet, that is common practice in many communities. These containers should be hidden by flowers and foliage; if not, crystal or other good looking bowls should be used. Inexpensive bowls of this kind could well be included with the flowers or better ones rented for these occasions.

The importance of using accessories appropriate to the occasion and suitable for the flowers is frequently minimized by the florist. It is true that flowers are beautiful in themselves, but how much more attractive they are in the harmonious company of the right containers and accessories!

Because many hostesses are conscious of this they ask the florist to use their bowls, epergnes and candelabra for parties instead of something he might have in stock. A clear understanding on the liability for loss or damage to these pieces, some of them antiques which may be irreplaceable, should always be made with the customer. Even the greatest precaution may not prevent scratches, corrosion or cracks on fine silver or crystal. The florist may be held responsible in case of theft and breakage, for which he may not have protective insurance, unless he has an agreement with the customer on this liability.

TABLE DECORATIONS

When selling flowers for a table decoration, except when the hostess is arranging her own, the first things the florist wants to know are how many persons are to be seated, and the dimensions and shape of the table. His suggestions for the design would be different for a round or oval table than for a rectangular or long, narrow banquet table.

For large parties at hotels and clubs he can quickly estimate the size of the table from the number of guests, i.e., for each guest, a foot of table length where they are seated on both sides. When they are seated on only one side, as in the case of the speaker's table, two feet are allowed for each person. Sometimes the tables are U-shape or T-shape for large groups of people, and he should ascertain from the club or hotel the exact dimensions and seating arrangement, unless his customer knows.

The width of these tables is usually from thirty to forty-two inches. When the tables are of the minimum width, the types of appropriate decoration are considerably limited. For some parties, a table of double width, almost five feet, is used, allowing a breadth of several feet of open space down the table to be decorated. Frequently, the guests at large parties are seated at separate tables for four, six or eight, which presents an entirely different problem.

When the table size and seating arrangement are known, the next question is that of the occasion. Ascertaining whether it will be informal or formal, luncheon or dinner, at home or otherwise, and the reason for the party is necessary to make appropriate suggestions for the decoration.

An informal ladies' bridge luncheon, a church auxiliary tea, a announcement party, a stag dinner, a banquet of a convention, a trousseau tea, a farewell dinner to a couple sailing abroad, a bridal shower, a testimonial dinner for a man elected to office, a buffet supper for a company's employees, a cocktail party for a group of newly weds, a baby shower, a party for a couple celebrating a wedding anniversary, a birthday dinner, a deb party, a luncheon for teenage girls or a party

for pre-school children,—all of these are occasions which might require the decorations. The mention of any one of them will set the mind of an imaginative florist in motion picturing decorations, each distinct and appropriate to the occasion.

After knowing the plans for tables, the occasion and kind of party, the florist should know about its setting. The size of the room, its colors and decoration will influence his choice of flowers and design. The hour of the party and the lighting in the room are important. For the daytime affair, flowers in pastel colors, including lavenders and blues, might be effective, but at night under artificial light they would lose much of their beauty.

Table decorations should never inconvenience the guests or service of food. Nothing is more annoying than ferns hanging in the soup or sticking to the butter. Flowers too tall and wide may result in their being removed from the table because guests tire of stretching their necks and shifting positions to see the persons opposite them.

TEA AND BUFFET TABLES

When guests are not seated at the table from which food is served, the florist should plan a decoration of entirely different proportions. Such an arrangement should be more dominating and much taller, because it is seen by guests in a standing position as they approach to be served.

For the tea table, used most generally in a home, epergnes, spreading bowls, large compotes, footed bowls or wine coolers are frequently used for flowers in tall, fountainlike spreading arrangements. The flowers and their design should be chosen to harmonize with the room and table proportions. The same would apply to buffet tables for the party at home.

When the party is large and given at a club or hotel, the buffet table is considerably larger. Sometimes there are several tables, one for punch and beverages, one for hors d'oeuvres and others for the main course and dessert. These tables should all be decorated in a harmonious scheme of color and design. Some of the tables may be

dominated by carved ice figures and fancy food designs executed by the chefs, with the flowers given a secondary position to accent them with color.

These tables are most generally skirted or boxed with cloths to the floor. This expanse of plain white cloth should be relieved with swags of foliage and flower clusters. Such decorations are most effective and should always be mentioned by the florist when discussing plans with the hostess.

The rooms engaged for these buffet dinners and suppers may also require other decoration to lend them atmosphere by emphasizing the theme or motif of the party. Tall arrangements, plaques or shields of foliages and flowers hung on the walls often are used without usurping crowded floor space.

THE SPEAKER'S TABLE

Business groups at luncheon or dinner meetings usually have a long head table on a platform for the speaker, officers and distinguished guests. This table is generally featured with floral decorations even though other tables are devoid of flowers. The florist should always remember the function of this table, that of honoring guests and presenting the program.

Obviously, flowers should not hide the people seated at the head table. The arrangements should be low, and, since only half of the table is used for food service, these may also be quite spreading. Some of the flowers might well cascade over the front side of the table. That area emphasized by the long plain white table cloth to the floor is most conspicuous. This otherwise barren space should be utilized as a background for the floral decorations at that table. Flowers cascading over the front side, swags, festoons and garlands are appropriate treatments.

Flickering candles on the speaker's table, unless they are in tall holders, hinder the vision of all guests at such an affair. When used, candles should be well spaced and featured primarily at the extreme ends of the table. Where tall flower arrangements would be effective,

they too should be placed at the ends with low arrangements in between them.

SOME HELPFUL SUGGESTIONS

Be sure to use waterproof containers on fine tables and linens.

Do not use wire around a bowl or container to hold chicken wire or Sno-Pak in place. Resulting rust spots on linen will cause serious complaints. Use Curly-Q or rubber-covered wire, instead, or better still, use Beal's clips to anchor the wire mesh, or select a container which will not need this extra wire. Pin-type flower holders are fine, but always be certain they are fastened securely with modeling clay.

For the long table, a series of smaller arrangements is usually more effective than one long centerpiece.

Small corsages or boutonnieres for the guests at a long narrow table may be used for decoration by placing them in garlands of foliage. Candlesticks tied with the same flowers lend height and interest.

Tall slender vases may be used advantageously at a formal dinner, because the flowers are high enough to permit cross-table conversation.

It is of utmost importance that table decorations be in good proportion to the shape and size of the table. A tiny centerpiece on the huge table is bad, but better than the one too large on a small table, because the guests still have room for their food on the former.

Flowers arranged inside of glass domes, cylinders or large brandy inhalers may offer a pleasing variation for decoration on the narrow table.

For every party, try to follow a theme or motif in decoration to fit the occasion.

In large dining rooms and ballrooms, flowers large in size and bold in color, are much more decorative than dainty pastel blooms.

Asymmetrical lines in design can be used to create more interest

and beauty on many tables than the usual symmetrical centerpiece in radiating lines.

When an odd number of guests are being seated, the decoration may be placed at the end of the table opposite the hostess. A taller arrangement can be used for this purpose.

The florist who completes his work for a party while guests are arriving causes the hostess embarrassment, which may result in loss of her patronage. Decorations should always be finished well in advance of party time. Punctuality on any timed order is a business obligation which should never be taken lightly, regardless of the size of the order. A florist's word on a promised delivery time should be as good as his bond.

Never oversell a customer with flowers for everyday use on her table. The weekly sale of a few flowers is much better than the semiannual sale of an extravagant bouquet.

White flowers are most effective when used alone or in combinations with only one other color.

The centerpiece on the average table should not be more than twelve to fifteen inches in height.

In selling table decorations, sell completed designs, not just twelve or eighteen flowers.

When novelties are used with flowers on a table, be sure they are harmonious with the occasion and the furnishings. Kitchen utensils in a shower centerpiece would be out of place with bone china, Sheffield silver and cutwork linen but very much at home with a burlap, homespun or checked table cloth and earthenware dishes.

It is not necessary to use oblong containers to make long centerpieces.

The focal point in table designs generally should be repeated on each side of the centerpiece. Best effects are gained by grouping colors and flower varieties to avoid a spotted salt and pepper look.

When cornucopias, swans or other novel containers are used, the flowers should follow the line and design of these holders.

Combinations of fruits and vegetables with flowers are most effective for table decorations. Gourds, Indian corn, hedge apples, wheat,

cattails, bittersweet and pumpkins are ideal for this use in the fall. Watermelons and canteloupe when split can be utilized as clever flower holders. The flower stems impaled into the meat of the melons will stay in place and absorb moisture to keep a good length of time. The possibilities in combinations of seasonal foliages, fruits and vegetables are too numerous to outline in detail.

Always avoid the combination of too many colors or varieties of flowers in one centerpiece except in closely bunched Victorian and colonial bouquets. A few flowers properly arranged may be more effective than dozens.

Remember that the talent of unusual artistic design is as valuable as flowers themselves. Giving away good style and talent is poor business. Designers in other trades charge more for style than materials!

XL * *Funeral and Memorial Flowers*

The deep-rooted custom of sending flowers to funerals as an expression of sympathy to the family and as a memorial tribute to the deceased has made this category of special occasion buying the largest in most flower shops. Whether this custom will prevail to the same extent in future years depends on the florist and on public reaction to his work. As yet no medium has been discovered to express the deep feelings of persons better than flowers, idealistic in their spiritual significance of life, beauty and hope.

The beauty of flowers which are full of religious symbolism, gives them added importance and meaning at funerals. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow referred to flowers as "emblems of our own resurrection, emblems of a bright and better land." The Reverend Henry Ward Beecher said, "Flowers may beckon toward us, but they speak toward Heaven and God." The poet, William Wordsworth, said: "The meanest flower that grows can give thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears." Edgar A. Guest expressed it this way:

Through the black earth I can see
Beauty coming back to me,
Life in blossom shall unfold,
Red and pink and yellow gold!
Thus my tulips in the spring
Prove the faith to which I cling.

Those quotations are but a few which we, as florists, often forget in our everyday work with flowers for funerals. The thoughts expressed in our work go deeper than dollars, profits and showmanship. Remembering these thoughts will help us to create more beautiful designs and give greater service to our customers and to the community in which we live.

TAKING THE ORDER

In handling the sale of flowers for funerals by telephone or in person, the florist should find out the sex and age of the deceased before he recommends the kind and color of flower or type of design. The funeral tribute should be appropriately chosen. Flowers selected for an infant would be pastel and small in size, whereas those for a man who was active and of middle age would be brighter and bolder and masculine in feeling.

The interest shown by the salesperson in selecting the flowers and suggesting the types of designs and best delivery time for the funeral piece is of utmost importance. The customer's preference for certain flowers and designs should, of course, be followed unless they seem entirely inappropriate. A few diplomatic queries and some alternate suggestions will generally lead to a better choice.

Accurate information, such as the name of the deceased, and time and place of the service, must be obtained and verified by comparison with published funeral notices.

The relationship of the customer with the deceased and with the family can be of great assistance to the florist in making the sale. In many cases, the customer does not know how to express his feelings and wants help in choosing his tribute. The close friend or fiance would want something more expressive of the relationship than would a casual acquaintance. A group of business associates would choose a more important offering for their fellow worker than would the individual who was once befriended by him.

The question of cost comes into the sale fairly early in many instances. The customer might have a definite amount in mind and would be interested in hearing only what could be done at that price. Others often inquire, "How much would it cost for a real nice spray?" The florist and his customer might have far different ideas as to what constitutes "real nice". The best approach then is for the florist to say that he tries to make every piece as attractive as possible and that a few flowers may mean as much as many. He might also add that the average popular prices for funeral pieces

range from \$7.50 to \$15.00, but that one could be smaller or larger. The undecided purchaser will generally choose the average, but might have paid only \$5.00 had the salesperson said, "We make sprays from \$5.00 up."

Most florists have minimum prices on funeral designs, just as they do on corsages, bridal bouquets, centerpieces, etc. Each individual flower shop must decide its own minimum. If a florist can make a spray for \$3.00 which pleases his customers, it is his privilege to continue the practice, whether he is making a fair profit or not. If that work does not please the public, the practice will not last long. The low-price shops have a place in all communities and their competition is good for all florists.

When a large number of flowers are being ordered for one service, the florist might suggest to customers that some be sent to the home in arrangements. These are appropriate before or after the service and are appreciated, because they seem more personal.

Occasionally a customer will choose certain flowers primarily because of their good keeping qualities. This is true of gladioli, carnations and chrysanthemums. A florist should always be candid in telling a customer what to expect from flowers when they are out of water and subject to drafts and heat. He should in no case misrepresent the facts or mislead a customer. Promising a design of red rosebuds and delivering one made of open red roses is as unethical as using asters for an order specifying delphinium.

The funeral work of florists has been termed the "bread and butter" of the industry. That may be true if reference is made to sales volume, but, if it means that stale week-old flowers are used, it is an insult. The term, funeral flowers, may be properly applied to stock developed to its most beautiful stage or to short or weak-stemmed flowers, which are perfect for some designs. The term should never be used to describe flowers which are ready for the trash heap.

The greatest fault of some florists is that of selling wilted, old blooms in funeral pieces, because they feel they will not be noticed

or returned. Getting by with such unfair tactics is the greatest blemish to our industry and causes more doubt on the part of the public than can be offset by ethical florists. Yet these unethical florists often are loudest in asking for florists' organizations to assist them in preventing "Please omit flowers" notices.

In many shops, most of the funeral orders are open; that is, the choice of flowers, colors, and often the design, is left to the florist. That confidence deserves, in return, the best judgment and conscientious service a florist can give.

CARDS AND TAGS

The signature card attached to each funeral piece is valuable to the bereaved family. On all telephone and telegraph orders, the florist writes these cards for his customers, unless he has their engraved personal cards on file. That these cards be written neatly and legibly with full names is fundamental. It is a favor and convenience to the family when they send out their thank you notes or acknowledgments.

Many florists also include a complete description of the flowers used for the order on the back of each card. This should be done for identification of the piece at the chapel when the card is removed. It also gives the family information enabling them to mention specific flowers when thanking the senders. This practice also saves time for the mortician, who records the flower list for each funeral, and it prevents errors he might innocently make in naming flowers or colors.

The envelopes or tags holding these cards should be labeled with the full name of the deceased and address of the service. Glassine envelopes often are used, so that the cards may be read without removing them.

Methods of attaching these cards vary in different communities and shops. Some are pinned to ribbons or flowers, others are tied on with string or narrow ribbon, and others are attached with a fine wire. Sometimes they may be attached to a wooden pick impaled

into a design which with a slight tug may be removed without danger of harming any of the flowers. For the convenience of the morticians in any locality, florists should use a uniform method.

DELIVERY

Most of the flowers for funerals are delivered two to three hours prior to the service to insure their freshness and still to allow sufficient time for the mortician to place them. When the body is lying in state or in a slumber room a few days before burial, some flowers especially baskets and urns are sent then. Other designs of good lasting quality are also sent a day or two early. These flowers will have served their full purpose even though they become wilted by funeral time, when many others replace them. Customs in various sections of the country differ greatly, and the florists' work is governed accordingly. For example, burial in many of the southern states is the day following death, which means a rush of work without much notice for the florist.

At towns where there is only one florist, a funeral of good size is a strain on his capacity. Extra help is called in, and often florists from the area go to his assistance. Although the hardships, lack of space and help, and the rush to get sufficient stock create real problems, that florist has a real advantage which florists at large cities miss. As he has practically all of the orders, he is able to plan the entire floral setting, an opportunity to make flowers at funerals more beautiful, harmonious, expressive and appropriate.

The rules and rituals of the various religious faiths also influence the delivery time and the use of flowers at funerals. For example, members of the Catholic faith hold a rosary service at the funeral chapel or home on the evening prior to a morning church ceremony. Flowers are used at the rosary and burial, but are not taken into the church. Some Jewish Orthodox congregations do not use flowers at the religious rites, while others do. Jewish Reformed church members, however, use flowers as do most members of Protestant churches. In any case, it is good etiquette to send flowers to the bereaved

family in mourning. Sometimes these expressions of sympathy sent to the home are gifts of food instead of flowers.

Usually funeral flowers are delivered to the place where the body is resting, but, when the service is to be held at a church or chapel other than that of the mortician, all flowers, except those sent early, are delivered to the church. At large funerals, of well known persons, where there are numerous flower orders, the considerate florist will call the mortician for instructions as to when and where he and the family would prefer to have the flowers delivered.

The way funeral flowers are handled by the florist's driver will have a great deal to do with their appearance at the funeral. His care will also set a good example for the personnel arranging them at the chapel. A florist who has several sizable orders for one funeral should offer to assist the funeral director in arranging the flowers and moving them to the cemetery. Polite conduct and neat, clean clothes should be voluntarily imposed on any florist or employee who enters a funeral home, church or private home. That is the least he can do to show his respect for the dignity and seriousness of the occasion.

TYPES OF FUNERAL OFFERINGS

The kinds of floral arrangements and designs suitable for use at a funeral are numerous, although most orders are for sprays and baskets. Wreaths, blooming plants, plaques, crosses, urns, double sprays on easels, hearts, pillows, sheafs, and emblematic designs signifying lodge, club or trade affiliations, are also used frequently. Elaborate designs such as the harp, open Bible, gates ajar, lyre, vacant chair and broken wheel were popular in years past and are still in demand in some localities. They have lost favor because of their elaborateness, morbidity and high cost.

The style and prevailing taste of the public for certain flower designs at funerals change as do styles and fashion trends for other things. The florist is instrumental in guiding these trends of taste and stimulating public demand for flowers of improved design. This

is accomplished through educational selling, promotion, publicity and advertising.

Sprays are popular because they give the customer a good showing for his money and because they lend themselves to convenient arrangement when hung on stands, walls and mouldings to form a background setting for the funeral service. These sprays may be designed in a number of ways but usually are made by tying the flower stems or by picking them into a base of Styrofoam, Sno-Pak or moss.

In some communities, baskets are preferred and far outrank in number the sprays at funerals. They are desirable because the flowers keep longer, being arranged in water. They may be sent earlier, to give the family an opportunity to use them more completely and to appreciate them fully. The general use of baskets at funerals has caused a problem of the florists' own making in some places. This is the practice of lending baskets, easels or vases for funeral flowers.

Containers and accessories should never be lent or rented for use with flowers sent as gifts. It creates an embarrassing, misunderstood situation that is costly to the florist. If a florist wishes to rent these things to the customer who uses them, that is all right, but it is objectionable when they are sent to a third party as a gift. In no case, should baskets or accessories be picked up without a definite agreement with the purchaser and a notice to the recipient. To do otherwise is a case of plain theft, and as such has been upheld by courts of law, with generous allowances for damages in addition. In other words, the baskets, easels, frames, etc., sold with flowers for a funeral become the property of the family of the deceased. Gathering up these used items at cemeteries after funerals and reselling them is the lowest form of unethical, debased business procedure any florist could possibly practice.

Wreaths, crosses and other designs are returning to more favorable use because of the monotony and nondescript numbers of sprays and baskets at funerals. Florists who are sincerely interested in pleasing their customers and impressing the recipients with out-

standingly beautiful work are suggesting pieces which are out of the ordinary, such as circular sunburst sprays on easels, handsome wreaths, crosses, hearts and more carefully designed baskets and sprays.

In doing this they are also using fresher flowers, sturdier construction, more appropriate foliage, and better ribbon and other accessories. Nothing detracts more from the rich beauty of flowers than cheap, sleazy metalline ribbon. A few loops of good satin or taffeta are no more expensive and give a better showing and richer effect than yards of poor-quality ribbon.

The use of gold letters and script on ribbon to indicate the name of the sender or his relationship to the deceased is losing ground and will probably not be done in a few years. Aside from being gaudy and ostentatious, the practice often smacks of commercialism. Gold lettering reading "Neighbors", or "Local No. 9000", or "Employees of the Blank Company" mean no more than saying "Look what we sent". On family pieces labeled, "father", "mother", "sister", "aunt", etc., they serve no real purpose unless they fill a sentimental wish of the family. The suggestion that these letters detract from the beauty of a floral piece is generally sufficient to discourage their use. When they are used at specific requests an added charge should be made for the materials and labor involved.

THE FAMILY FLOWERS

The flowers for the casket are usually furnished by the immediate family of the deceased. Their choice of flowers and design is often determined in group conference with the florist at the shop or the family's home. When a family member phones to say that they would like to discuss flowers for the service, the florist should offer to go to the residence if it would be a convenience to the family. Any direct solicitation of this order is always considered obnoxious.

The funeral plans and family wishes should guide the florist in his recommendations. He, of course, will conscientiously refrain from taking advantage of the family's emotional state of mind in selling these flowers. The price should be determined by circumstances,

such as the number of participating relatives, their preferences in design and kind of flowers, and their financial status.

The color of the casket, the colors of the dress worn in case the deceased is a woman, and the personal preferences of the family should be taken into consideration. Whether the casket will be open during the service, whether it is full couch or half, and whether burial or cremation will immediately follow the service are all questions which should influence the florist in making suggestions. These flowers should suit the personality of the deceased as much as possible.

The casket piece may take the form of a double spray, a pall, a blanket, a scarf, a cross, a garland, a sheaf, etc. The simplest sheaf design may be as effective and appropriate as a blanket of roses and orchids. A scarf about eighteen inches wide and four feet long, designed of ivy tendrils or other foliage, with a cluster of flowers, laid diagonally across a beautiful metallic casket may be in better taste than a full blanket. The mortician will appreciate the ease with which it can be handled and take pride in the fact that a casket worth more than a thousand dollars is not covered entirely by a few dollars worth of flowers and foliage.

The cross design may be preferred for its religious symbolism. White flowers or foliages with a contrasting cluster in the center or at the base are most often used.

At military funerals, the casket is flag-draped, and the family generally selects a design which is placed at the head of the casket or displayed behind it. This may take the form of a wreath, spray, cross, or other design. Pieces of this kind are frequently sent by relatives outside of the immediate family.

A corsage for the pillow, hand or shoulder is frequently used for women and is sent by relatives or very close friends. Grandchildren or other relatives may wish to send something personal and more intimate than an ordinary wreath or basket. A small heart of flowers, a corsage, or a dainty cluster or garland of flowers might be fastened to the inside lining of the casket cover to answer their wish and at

the same time relieve the severe blank feeling of that area of tufted fabric.

Sometimes the family desires a casket piece for use a day or two prior to the service, to be replaced by a duplicate or different piece on the day of the funeral. The use of water picks and Sno-Pak for the flowers may prolong their life sufficiently to obviate the necessity of replacement. In every case, the florist should be sure that there are no wilted flowers on the casket at the time of the service.

The flowers used on the casket should not be tall. They should be low and hug the shape of the casket. If they are too tall, they will become broken and disarranged, because they will not clear the door of the hearse when the casket is moved for burial. Flowers should not drape down so far on the side of the casket that they interfere with the handles and the pallbearers. Furthermore, the piece should be so constructed that it will not easily slip out of place or scratch or mar either the cloth, wood or metallic finish of a casket. Rubber-covered arms on casket saddle frames are made to use as foundations for these designs. Protruding picks and wires, and damp moss or Sno-Pak may cause serious damage, unless an appropriate finish of protective material is fastened to the underside of the casketpiece

COOPERATION WITH MORTICIANS

Florists and morticians are cooperating more closely than ever in working out their mutual problems of handling, displaying and caring for flowers at funerals. The constructive criticism, assistance and good will of the mortician are as important to the florist as flower orders for funerals.

Some of these problems are as follows:

1. Standardizing tags or cards to avoid errors in delivery and receiving.
2. Providing adequate space for receiving and displaying flowers.
3. Preventing damage to caskets and floors.
4. Recording floral pieces.

5. Describing the flowers on back of cards or envelopes.
6. Caring for the flowers in funeral homes.
7. Agreeing on preferred types of flower containers and hangers for designs and sprays.
8. Deciding on best times for delivery of flowers.
9. Transporting of flowers to place of service and burial.
10. Resisting the "please-omit-notices" by making flowers more effective in design and more adaptable for display.

The funeral director is occasionally asked by the family to order their flowers and add the cost to his bill. This is often the case when the family are unacquainted at the city or has no preference among florists. The mortician, interested primarily in pleasing the family, will order the flowers from the florist he considers the best. His experience in receiving and displaying the work of many shops makes him a good judge. He will often phone that florist and ask him to talk to the family, have it select the flowers and decide on the price, which he will add to the bill, and he will pay the florist if that is the desire of the relatives. In other cases, he will order the flowers and arrange all details.

Some florists solicit this patronage from funeral homes and pay commissions on these orders. At some small towns, where there is no florist, the undertaker acts as agent for the florist at another city. When he takes the orders, makes the collections, etc., payment of commissions would be proper, as it is with any agent.

PLEASE OMIT NOTICES

The increased number of requests for no flowers printed in funeral notices the past few years has caused grave concern in the minds of industry leaders and florists everywhere. "Please omit flowers" has been used most often at the request of families who are prominent in social and business life.

The request has never been used because people do not like or appreciate flowers; in most cases, they want flowers and accept those sent in spite of the request, and, in addition, buy flowers themselves

to give the desired floral background and atmosphere. In some cases, they make the request from unselfish motives, to relieve people who feel obligated to send flowers. The request, however, seems cold and is baffling to real friends of the family, who are anxious to send flowers to express their sympathy and respect.

In other cases, the motive of the family is to limit the avalanche of flowers which descends in case of the death of a prominent individual. Too much of any good thing, including flowers, may be a burden and inconsistent with the conservative good taste of a family who rebel at any lavish display or waste.

These feelings are the underlying reasons back of the "please omit" requests of many families and are understandable and seem logical to florists and morticians alike. They are, however, alert to point out to a family the embarrassment and confusion which result. Emily Post says that while the "please omit" notice relieves one from the obligation of sending flowers, members of the family or intimate friends may send flowers if they wish to do so.

Where the request is made for memorial donations to some charity *instead* of sending flowers to the funeral, florists are justified in calling attention to the unfair discrimination against flowers. The request for donations to specific charities is proper, but the phrase, "instead of", is unfair, whether it refers to flowers, entertainment, food or anything else. Whenever this is sanely and fairly explained, the charitable group and their supporters cease using any discrimination in raising these funds.

The old argument that flowers are nonessential and wasteful is as ridiculous as saying that modern civilization's high standard of living is unnecessary. Many of the finer things of life, our customs, and inventions would be discarded were such reasoning carried to its logical extreme. Embalming, caskets, vaults, grave markers, music, etc., would be all cast aside. It can never be said that flowers do not serve a real purpose. A few funerals without any flowers at all would make the strongest arguments to stop the spotty trend in favor of please-omit-flowers.

Local and national florists' organizations, interested in public relations and close cooperation with morticians and clergymen, are studying other means of solving this problem. So far the only real solution seems to be improved designing of fresh flowers and better service by all florists on funeral orders. Open hostility and publicity would lead to greater loss to the industry in good will and sales than all the "please omit" notices for years to come. If the cure is more harmful than the ailment, it should not be used.

The time, energy and money spent in trying to solve this problem might better be used in channels to promote flower sales for home use and in continued improvement of all phases of our business, including the funeral orders. The florist, alarmed at restrictions to the use of his merchandise at funerals, has no need to worry as long as he continually tries to improve his flowers and service, and as long as the total flower consumption continues to increase each year.

MEMORIAL FLOWERS

Quantities of flowers are used to decorate graves, mausoleums and church altars in tribute to the memory of deceased relatives for years and years after the burial. This custom, as old as civilization itself, is another example of the sentiment and symbolism attached to flowers.

Anniversaries, birthdays, holy days of some faiths, including Easter and Christmas, and Memorial Day are some of the occasions for which memorial flowers are used. Fresh flowers in various designs, as well as artificial flowers, are sold for this purpose. Cemetery vases arranged with fresh flowers and blooming plants are most popular in some areas. In some shops located near cemeteries, this work constitutes the main part of their business.

Regulations, particularly those of the newer memorial park cemeteries, prohibit the planting of shrubs, trees and flowers and restrict erection of certain memorial markers, because perpetual care and landscaping are provided with the sale of the lots.

Many orders for these flowers require their delivery to cemeteries

by the florist. Locating the grave often presents a problem where there is no office on the premises. Some of the cemeteries have receiving offices and place the flowers themselves.

Wreaths of prepared foliages and seed pods are popular for their lasting qualities. Cycas, oak, magnolia, galax, ruscus and evergreens are fashioned into wreaths, with clusters of fresh flowers, cones, seed pods or artificial flowers.

Many churches have altar flowers contributed by various members each week in memory of loved ones. This appeals to families, because the flowers are performing a service to the congregations. The flowers are sometimes taken to the cemetery after the Sunday service or are distributed to shut-in members of the congregation. A printed notice in the church bulletin usually states that the flowers were donated to the memory of a deceased member. Cooperation with altar guilds, clergymen, cemetery custodians and officials will make the work of every florist easier and more acceptable.

HINTS TO DESIGNERS

Dark colors such as violet, purple, deep blue and maroon do not show up effectively in dimly lighted chapels. Combined with white or pale shades, these flowers take on more brilliancy. White flowers and those of pale or brilliant hues are never lost or too subdued to show in a floral display.

When the color preference of the family is known, use that color and others which harmonize in as many pieces as possible.

Wreaths with spreading clusters of spike flowers, such as delphinium and snapdragon, are most often badly disarranged by the time they reach the cemetery.

Baskets and vases with substantial bases, to prevent tipping and spilling of water, should always be used.

Most flowers used in funeral sprays should be wired. Green wire is preferable, because it does not glisten conspicuously.

Refrain from using boards as foundations for funeral sprays.

They cannot be hung or pierced from the back to display on the mortician's racks and screens.

An easel should always be in good proportion to the design it holds. The green wire easels are preferred by many designers, because they are inconspicuous.

All designs and sprays should be neatly finished on the back. Protruding wire and picks are dangerous to handle and harmful to surfaces with which they come in contact.

Set pieces such as pillows, wreaths and emblems, do not lose their identity in a large floral display.

The expensive funeral piece may be more appreciated for its elegance than size. For large funerals, small designs of lovelier flowers should be used.

Red flowers at a man's funeral are always appropriate. Dainty, lacy greens combined with them are not nearly so effective as heavier foliage, such as salal, laurel or camellia leaves.

Loosely tied knots on the ends of satin ribbons give an attractive finish to bows used on funeral designs.

Solid flower designs in crosses and wreaths should be full and rounded, not skimpy and flat in effect.

Sweetheart roses or other dainty flowers in graceful strands sewed to net make effective coverings for children's caskets.

A garland of tiny rosebuds in a swag effect is a good design to pin on the satin lining of a casket cover. A miniature heart or cross may also be made of small flowers.

The three upper portions of a cross should all be of the same length and size.

White pieces for a funeral have character and distinctiveness.

Remember that a customer asking for a blanket may in reality be referring to a piece for the casket, not usually a blanket design as florists know it. Wreaths and sprays are also confused.

A solid wreath of statice, heather or celosia is most attractive, and will dry and last a long time. Clusters of other flowers may be added for the service and removed when they wilt on the grave.

Ribbons are more effective in a funeral design if their loops are

interspersed with flowers in a funeral design. Otherwise they look like something added, but not belonging to it.

All the rules of color and balance in designing are as important to funeral work as any other.

Good construction is fundamental.

Never forget that flowers themselves and the manner in which florists present them are the best ads for the industry.

XLI * *Holidays in the Flower Shop*

The word holiday means anything but leisure time to the florist, as it just spells hard work. The holidays referred to are New Year's Day, St. Valentine's day, Easter, Mother's Day, Memorial Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas. The only real holidays for most florists are the Fourth of July and Labor Day, when they can close shop because they are not flower-buying occasions.

The seven major flower holidays have more significance than big sales volume to the florist. They are the only days some of his customers enter the shop. Like the preacher and his parishioners on Easter and Christmas, the florist meets flower buyers who seem only vaguely familiar to him. Those persons judge the florist, his service, prices and merchandise on the basis of those annual holiday experiences. Pleasing a customer at almost any other time would be easy in comparison and much more likely to result in his becoming a regular customer and flower buyer in between holidays.

The purpose of this chapter is to outline methods a florist may adopt to ease the stress and strain of holiday work.

HOLIDAY RECORDS

The greatest aid to a florist in making plans for a holiday is the record of his experiences for that day in previous years. These records should be compiled shortly after each holiday and filed with the pertinent summaries of past holidays. Trusting to memory and referring only to sales totals are haphazard and unbusinesslike practices.

The first and most important information to record is a list of all purchases for the week. This should include plants, cut flowers and all special accessories, quantities, varieties, colors, cost prices and dates received. For Christmas, where decorative materials are sold in

quantities all month, the record of purchases should include those items.

Notations should be made opposite each of these items to indicate which were sold out completely and how many were carried over and dumped. In case of non-perishable materials, a record of the quantities stored away for the next year will be a great help in buying. If purchases on some items were inadequate to meet the demand, the shortage so noted may prevent a recurrence.

A list giving the number of sales of corsages, plants, arrangements, centerpieces, wreaths, etc., and the dollar volume is also helpful in anticipating holiday needs.

A roster giving the names of extra helpers employed for these rush days and the number of days and hours they worked is also a great convenience. A record of the working hours of each person, noting also whether the sales and delivery help was adequate, is also valuable. The extra cars used for delivery and weather conditions as they affected sales and deliveries should be mentioned for each day. Neglect in keeping this information may vitally affect the service or create unnecessary expense. Rating these helpers as to ability and attitude may be worthwhile if there are many given such periodic employment.

A record of the advertising, promotional and publicity efforts used prior to holidays is indispensable to the florist. That record should have attached to it copies of the ads used, the dates of publication and costs, as well as samples of direct-mail releases. Special window and outdoor displays, theater and radio advertising, and car ads, and their effect on the sales and shop traffic should be described.

Notes on the special decorations installed for clubs, churches, stores and hotels, with brief descriptions, including the prices will make those sales and the planning of them much easier the following year.

BUYING

It takes careful thought and analysis to buy stock for holidays. Most of these purchases must be made weeks in advance to be sure of

having the necessary flowers and supplies. Wholesalers and pot plant growers are generally able to forecast the supply and quote prices a month in advance. When the florist grows much of his own stock, he buys only items he will require to augment his own anticipated crop.

With his record of purchases for the same holiday in past years at hand, a florist can judge quite accurately his requirements by taking into consideration his recent sales trends. If his general business is up ten percent over the previous year, his holiday purchases should reflect the same increase.

For pot plants, he should visit greenhouse ranges and select the varieties and sizes he will need, and decide on the quantities he will order for delivery to his shop on certain dates. Or, if the grower is located in the same vicinity, he may phone him daily to replenish his store stock. Inspection of crops of different growers is advisable to be certain that the best quality plants are bought. Some of the crops might be too advanced and by holiday time their over-ripe condition would result in customer dissatisfaction. The size, shape and general condition of the plants will influence the purchases of the retailer. The florist who procrastinates too long in selecting blooming plants may find himself in the precarious position of doing without or buying the leftovers.

Cut flowers are generally purchased early also, but without the advantage of advance inspection. These orders are usually placed with wholesale firms from which the florist has been making regular purchases. That wholesaler understands and knows the grades of cut flowers the florist is in the habit of buying, and is able to help him in his ordering. The florist's confidence in the integrity and ability of the wholesaler to fill his requirements specifically, as ordered, will be a deciding factor in placing the order.

Various holidays find certain flowers in short supply compared to the demand. Red carnations on February 14 is a good example. On scarce items the wholesalers often prorate the available supply in accordance with the previous orders or current buying. Growers often follow the same procedure on rare plants. They both know that

their efforts to play fair and square in distributing the supply at prevailing market prices will stand them in good stead with all florists.

One of the recurring and justifiable holiday complaints of retail florists is that of "pickled" flowers on the market and in their shops. These flowers are held off of the market by growers hoping for higher holiday prices, when, in reality they should have been sent to the market as they matured. Retailers having old flowers foisted upon them at holiday times, with resulting serious customer repercussions, do not soon forget such treatment at the hands of a wholesaler or grower. Many florists push plant sales on holidays in preference to cut flowers for that reason, plus the fact that cut flowers are much higher in cost at holidays.

The problem of greatly advanced wholesale prices on flowers at holiday times was discussed in Chapter 25, "Wholesaler and Grower".

Purchases of other holiday gift items, and novelties are usually made months ahead. The inventory of supplies, such as gift wrapping materials, boxes, ribbon and the like, should also be checked.

From the profit standpoint, it is much better to have a complete sellout of holiday items, such as poinsettias and Easter lilies, risking the loss of a few sales, than it is to have stock left over which will not likely be sold. A few hundred cut flowers not sold or a few dozen plants left over may cancel the profits on twice that many sold.

TRAINING EXTRA HELP

Competent spare-time helpers in the flower shop are not easy to find. In the midst of a frantic rush, the florist is tempted to take just anyone who is willing to work, regardless of qualifications. A much better method, however, would be to have a group of part time workers who had been previously interviewed subject to call for holiday work. These workers should be called in for extra work on busy days in between holidays throughout the year. That experience will familiarize them with shop activities, and they will have received constructive training and supervision when the permanent staff had the time to train them. All personnel is too occupied at holidays to take time for this instruction.

These extra workers are invaluable to efficient shop operation if they are trained for specific duties. Some shops have work for a few of this part time staff as often as once or twice a week. Rotating their calls for work and widening the span of their duties will make them more versatile employees when the rush begins. For instance, during rush hours on the sales floor they could reinforce the sales staff, and, when that subsided, they could be used in the work room for various duties, such as packing, wiring or acting as assistants to designers and the office staff.

Extra telephone sales persons are required in shops which have several trunk lines, because telephones practically ring off the walls on the days preceding any holiday. These sales persons are filling positions which require more than average training to make them expert telephone salesmen. The effort and cost spent for this training will more than pay for itself in one day.

Group meetings of these extra workers and the regular staff should be held prior to each holiday. The florist at those times should explain the shop policies and plans for division of the work in detail, mentioning the specific responsibilities of each and assigning them to the supervision of certain of the full time personnel. Special sales programs should be discussed fully, and all helpers should be familiar with the stock, prices, advance promotions and advertising.

Supervision of all employees on a busy day is necessary for smooth efficiency. If the owner or one of his key employees does nothing else but that, it may mean the difference between confusion and loss of good service and profit.

DELIVERIES AND WILL CALLS

Deliveries of flowers on a holiday and the few days before present a serious problem to every florist. Orders taken weeks ahead stack up for preparation and delivery on those days. Most of the customers request delivery on Christmas Eve, Easter morning, late New Year's Eve, and the like. If all of these requests are not met with real sales efforts, encouraging and convincing customers on the advisability

of earlier delivery, the florist will find himself in a real bottleneck of last minute orders.

Even with deliveries spaced over a three or four day period, it takes alert supervision to route them accurately for the drivers, paying particular attention to timed orders, size of each car's load, and distances and areas to be covered. In addition, highly perishable packages, such as corsages and cut flowers, must receive precedence over plants and arrangements, unless delivery time is specified on the latter.

Packages returned because of incorrect addresses and consignees' not being home also require careful and prompt attention. Instructions to drivers for disposition of these parcels should always be made in advance. Neighbors of the party, not at home, are generally willing to accept packages for them and sign receipts, in which case a notice to that effect should be left on the door of the person not at home. Where there are no close neighbors, or they hesitate accepting the flowers because they do not know whether the party is out of the city or not, the package should be returned and delivery made as soon as the consignee can be reached.

Every holiday brings numerous phone calls from customers who wish to know whether or not the flowers had been delivered. If the returned receipts on completed deliveries are promptly filed alphabetically for those days, much time will be saved in verifying deliveries. A definite answer, including the name of the party receiving the package, can usually be given the customer at once.

The experience of extra drivers, the condition of their cars and their knowledge of the city should always be checked. Blanket insurance to absolve the florist from liability in case of accidents is always advisable. Extra drivers may be paid a flat hourly rate or a set amount for each package delivered. Regular experienced drivers for the shop should deliver these orders which require special handling of any sort.

A large number of deliveries at holidays may be avoided if the salesperson is on his toes. The public is quite aware of the difficult delivery problem of all stores. Usually, in the course of the purchase,

inquiry is made as to the possibility of an early delivery or delivery at a certain hour. A moment's hesitation by the salesperson or a tactful reference to the number of extra drivers and the holiday rush will generally result in the customer's saying that he or she would be happy to pick up the package. This is no more than good salesmanship in a flower shop.

Easter Sunday morning, Mothers' Day morning and Christmas Eve will find those shops with more orders for will call than delivery. That is money in the florist's pocket but it also puts on him the obligation to see to it that those customers are not delayed when they call for their packages. A will call system should be worked out. Plants and gift novelties should be placed in one area and cut flowers in a section of the storage refrigerator. All of these packages should be arranged or stacked on racks in alphabetical order, so that they may be found and handed to the waiting customer without delay.

OTHER ADVANCE PREPARATIONS

Floor and display space in the average shop always seem inadequate on holidays. On these days, when the shop has the largest crowds of shoppers, conditions are less favorable from every viewpoint, except for an abundance of flowers from which to choose. By using tiered stands and racks for plants and novelty items, by grouping stock as to price, color and size, and by applying good design technique to floor displays, the shop may be made breathtakingly beautiful. Furthermore, the displays can be placed to give the illusion of more floor area. None of the displays should be so placed that coats, skirts and clothes of passing customers would mar or injure them.

A basement or adjacent storage room in which to place surplus plants and gift items which are duplicates of those displayed in the sales area should always be utilized, if available, to save space for shoppers. These extra rooms are ideal for lay-away purchases, selected items already sold and bulky pieces of unsold stock.

Almost every florist sells quantities of evergreens at Christmas in the form of trees, wreaths, roping, centerpieces, knockers, etc. To

keep these fresh a cold, moist air is necessary. If a nearby shed or vacant storeroom can be rented much of that material can be made up weeks in advance and kept for quick sale in perfect condition. When cold rooms are not to be had, some florists rent a nearby vacant lot, maybe putting up a tent or large trailer to protect some of the pieces from rain and ice. These items are brought to the store and delivered as they are sold from samples.

Holiday window and shop displays and outdoor Christmas decorations for the store should be planned by the florist months ahead of time. Any special props or lights required should be on hand to assure putting them up as scheduled.

Extra boxes for corsages and cut flowers should be assembled and paper lined before the rush. These may also be decorated with special stickers and labels in advance.

Ribbon bows for corsages and plants may be tied and hung on wires or packed loosely in boxes ready for use. Cones may be wired on early fall days, so that they are ready to attach to Christmas greens when the time comes. Valentine hearts of wire, lace, paper or chenille may be made in mid-January. Memorial Day wreaths of prepared materials should be made even before Mothers' Day rolls around. Styrofoam foundations and cut-outs adaptable to various holidays may be made months ahead in spare time. Vases and bowls which are used in large quantity for all kinds of arrangements should be prepared with chicken wire or Sno-Pak well ahead of the holiday rush.

A few days prior to every heavy corsage-buying holiday, various foliages such as camellia leaves, gardenia leaves, ivy, etc., may be wired and taped. These keep perfectly in moistened Conservettes or plastic bags in the refrigerator. Many corsage flowers such as orchids, camellias, gardenias, etc., keep well that way. Complete corsages may be made in advance of the last days' rush to have ready for immediate sale.

Jardinieres of the sizes needed for plants purchased for the holidays should be in readiness. Foliage plants should be planted in assorted containers for quick sale. Dish gardens, planted centerpieces

and wall brackets are always popular. Seasonal arrangements of berries and dried foliages or evergreens should also be considered.

Every florist can, by planning ahead, make his holiday work much simpler if he allots the time to make these and other advance preparations. When the work is well planned, it will necessitate much less overtime and will probably result in the florist's going home in time to enjoy at least part of the holiday with his family.

HELPFUL HINTS

Do not accept more orders than it is possible to fill. It is better to refuse some last-minute orders than to jeopardize a good reputation on those already booked.

In spite of the hectic rush, remember that a smile and courteous treatment of customers and employees always pays dividends. What is more, those pleasant attitudes are contagious!

Never overlook the great sales value of good packaging. Making every package a thing of beauty, in keeping with the season or holiday, will stamp the flower shop as one where details are important.

A Valentine gift of flowers does not mean as much when it is delivered late in the day. The corsage delivered after church time will miss the Easter parade. It is a poor way to say Merry Christmas with wilted roses on Christmas night. The centerpiece delivered at six o'clock Thanksgiving day will not look too good with the dinner leftovers. In other words, have your customers order *early* and then follow through with deliveries well designed and *on time*.

Holly corsages and Christmas candles decorated with cones and evergreens are popular three weeks before the holiday. So are poinsettia plants.

On the day after Christmas, place New Year's displays in the windows. Never allow any holiday display to remain in place even a day after it is past.

A flower shop should never look dirty and messy regardless of the rush.

On days when refrigerators are crowded with valuable holiday

stock, make frequent double checks on the temperatures. A breakdown can be very costly.

An occasional moment of relaxation for overworked employees, with coffee and cake on the house, is a good investment.

It never pays to promise a customer something unless you are sure you can fulfill it.

Early delivery of plants on every holiday will save needed time for the more perishable cut flowers and corsages. Easter lilies, poinsettia plants and the like are appreciated and enjoyed much more when delivered several days early. The day after the holiday they look like the Christmas tree without packages.

Good display technique in the flower shop will result in impulse buying, particularly at holiday times, when customers have gift lists they are completing.

Time taken to inform the customer and recipient about the proper care of certain plants and flowers is always time well spent.

Avoid monotony in decorations, arrangements, wreaths and plant treatments at holiday time. No one appreciates seeing the same thing over and over. New ideas and designs from year to year will keep customers interested in flowers for gifts.

Corsages made up in advance keep perfectly three to four days if placed in cartons lined with moist cotton all around, including the top, and stored in the refrigerator.

Palm Sunday open house at the greenhouse or flower shop is one good promotion for Easter sales.

Keep a close check on stock as holiday orders are taken. Overestimating what you have on hand may result in a hopeless shortage before all the orders are filled.

System in the flower shop can solve most of its problems, making of it a better place to shop, an ideal place in which to work, and a profitable business for the owner.